

1609 | 5707.

HISTORIC MEMOIR
ON THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION:

TO WHICH ARE ANNEXED,

STRICTURES

ON THE

REFLECTIONS

OF THE

Rt. Hon. EDMUND BURKE.

Spondeo digna tuis ingentibus omnia cœptis. VIRG.

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HISTORIC MEMOIR
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THAT great and memorable Revolution which has so recently taken place in the kingdom of FRANCE, affords ample scope for deep and interesting reflection: and it can be no unpleasing task to exhibit, though in a very limited compass, a clear and faithful view of this astonishing event, in its remote causes and final establishment. The last sparks of the flame of liberty in France, seem to have been extinguished by Cardinal Richelieu, in the capture of Rochelle, and the final reduction of the Protestants.—And in the succeeding reign it is well known how low the national character was sunk and degraded, by the incense and adulation offered at the shrine of an ambitious and imperious despot. The glorious and successful resistance of England to the tyranny of the House of Stuart at that period, seemed to make little impression

pression upon the minds of the French. All public duties and civil obligations were supposed to be comprehended in the term *loyalty*; and the abdicated Monarch of Great Britain was regarded in France, as a Sovereign unjustly and iniquitously divested of his Crown, by a treasonable conspiracy of his heretical and rebellious subjects. The efforts made by Louis XIV. to restore that wretched bigot to the throne of these kingdoms, met with the universal applause and approbation of his people, who considered them as acts of the most exalted heroism. During the whole of that reign, and for many years afterwards, no symptoms appeared of any considerable change in the public system of thinking. When the Duke of Orleans, Regent of France, was urged to correct some of the more flagrant abuses in the State, he replied, "I am ready for reformation, but the age I live in is not." And it was about the middle of the century that the dawn of a new and more enlightened era was first discernible in the opposition of divers of the Parliaments, to the arbitrary mandates of the Monarch. The times, however, were unfavourable to the success of their efforts; which were not, perhaps, directed by the dictates of sound policy, so much as by the impulse of passion and resentment. And before the conclusion of the reign of the late King, every prospect of a melioration of the Constitution, or a reform in the State, seem totally blasted, by not merely the suspension or banishment, but the absolute annihilation

tion of the Parliament of Paris, in consequence of reiterated acts of disobedience to the royal authority, and the substitution of a new Court wholly dependent upon the Crown. At the accession of the present Sovereign, however, who was anxious to acquire the confidence and affection of his people, which his predecessor had so justly forfeited by the tyranny of his public, and the profligacy of his private conduct, the Parliament of Paris was restored, and with it the hopes of the enlightened part of the nation revived ; and though severe restrictions were imposed upon that assembly by the new Monarch, they soon demonstrated by their conduct, that they were fully sensible of their own dignity and importance, and resolutely determined to preserve their rights and privileges, sacred and inviolate. The fact was, that a mighty revolution had now taken place in the minds of men : and they well knew, that their opposition to the oppressive measures of the Court, would meet with the highest applause, and the most zealous support from the nation at large. A new class of illustrious writers had arisen, the perusal of whose works had, as by some potent charm, dispelled the clouds of darkness, ignorance, and bigotry, in which the nation had been so long enveloped. Voltaire, Helvetius, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, appeared most conspicuous in the band. And though it must be acknowledged, that the radical ideas which they inculcate respecting the abstract theory of government, the nature of the social contract, the unalienable

alienable right of toleration, and the true and genuine spirit of laws, were transplanted from the English philosophers; yet were they exhibited by these great men in a garb so striking, so attractive, so captivating, that delight and conviction accompanied each other. Never did Philosophy boast so glorious a triumph. Never were reason and truth so rapidly and extensively diffused. And the alliance with America, which was the result of the mad and ruinous politics of Great Britain, indelibly established the impression in favour of Liberty, by affording them an opportunity of bringing their speculative principles into act, and of fanning the rising flame, by transferring that spirit which pervaded the circles of domestic life, into the grand and interesting scenes of civil and military transactions. After the successful termination of this war on the part of France, which was not effected but at the expence of an enormous addition to the load of public debt under which she already laboured, on an accurate investigation into the state of the finances, it appeared that the expenditure of the nation exceeded by a very enormous sum its annual revenue, notwithstanding the numerous reductions made by the Court, of the antient civil and military establishment. A grand effort of Government, therefore, became necessary, in order to supply this alarming deficiency, by the imposition of new and heavy taxes. But the Parliament of Paris peremptorily refused to enregister the royal edicts issued for this purpose. Provoked by

by resistance, the Monarch held in person a Bed of Justice, and commanded the proper officers to enregister the edicts. At the next meeting of the Parliament, the act of the officers was declared null and void; as proceeding from compulsion, and destitute of legal authority. The banishment of the Parliament, was the immediate consequence of this bold resolution: And the establishment of a new Court, styled "*La Cour Pleniere*," attempted, in order to execute its necessary functions. But the spirit of resistance became universal. Those who presumed to accept of seats in the new Court, were, by the concurrent resolutions of the provincial parliaments and municipalities, declared enemies to their country. The common course of judicial proceedings was interrupted. The civil government seemed to have lost its energy; tumults every-where prevailed, and matters were to appearance rapidly verging to a state of anarchy and rebellion; when the King, who was manifestly destitute of that vigour which could alone oppose with effect, and of that wisdom which gives dignity to concession, suddenly determined to recal the Parliament, and at the same time to convene a meeting of the *Notables* of the realm—or to assemble, agreeably to antient custom in France, a convention of the most considerable persons in the kingdom, of all ranks and orders, for the purpose of advising the Crown in difficult and dangerous emergencies. On examination, this assembly discovered, that the most flagrant embez-

lements had taken place in the royal Treasury. The downfal of M. de Calonne, the Comptroller General of the Finances, was the immediate result of this discovery ; and the elevation of M. Neckar, who had formerly occupied that important station. The *Notables*, however, acknowledged their total incompetency to reform the abuses, or relieve the embarrassments of the State. And they concluded their deliberations, by advising the King, without delay, to convoke the States-General of the kingdom, who alone possessed sufficient influence and authority, to apply those remedies, which the political disorders of the State rendered indispensably necessary. This had in fact been for several years past, the grand object of the hopes and wishes of the people. And the inflexible resolution of the Parliament of Paris, to enregister the edicts of the Crown, was apparently, and almost avowedly, directed to the accomplishment of this purpose. The Monarch, seeing himself without resources, alarmed at the critical and dangerous situation to which he was imperceptibly reduced, and desirous to regain the affections of the people, at length declared his resolution to convene the States-General, which had not met since the year 1614. This resolution was chiefly ascribed to the influence of M. Neckar, who, in December 1788, made a report to the King in council, relative to the principal points necessary to be ascertained previous to the actual convocation of that assembly. According to antient form, the States of the kingdom confi-

fisted of three distinct Orders; the Nobility, the Clergy, and the *Tiers Etat*, or Commons, who sat in separate Houses; and the questions which came under their discussion, were determined by a plurality of Orders. Also the different bailliages or districts into which the kingdom was divided, notwithstanding their extreme disparity with respect to extent, riches, and population, were empowered to elect the same number of deputies; and when actually assembled, the votes of each House, or *Chamber*, were collected, not individually, but by bailliages; and the number of deputies of each Order was precisely the same. It is evident, therefore, that the constitution of this assembly was radically defective; and that the share of influence and authority possessed by the Commons, or People, for whose benefit alone the powers of Government ought to be exercised, was extremely limited and circumscribed; and that by a junction or combination of the two higher Orders, they might be rendered wholly insignificant and useless. And as the majority of the nobility and clergy, would naturally be devoted to the interests of the Crown, which would also possess great influence in the election of the deputies of the smaller bailliages, it is no less evident, that the whole assembly would be so much under the controul of the Sovereign, supported by the power of the aristocracy, that no hope could be entertained of any effectual reformation of the political evils and oppressions, by

which the kingdom was reduced to a state the most deplorable, and to which it had so long indignantly submitted. As the first and most indispensable requisite, therefore, to elevate the Commons to that ascendancy in the scale of power which they were entitled to possess, the people were secretly encouraged and incited, by those whose profound sagacity at this period happily modelled and guided the opinions and conduct of the public, to present petitions to the Throne from every part of the kingdom, that the number of deputies of the Third Estate might be equal to that of the other two Orders united. This was a request in itself not very acceptable to the Monarch, or the ministers of the Crown; but as it was now the policy of the Court to conciliate the affections of the people, it was determined to gratify them in this particular. "For," as M. Neckar observes in his memorial, "the three Orders being authorized, by the antient and established constitution of the States, to deliberate and to vote separately, the number of deputies of which each Order may be composed, does not seem a question of sufficient importance to excite that degree of vehemence with which it has been agitated." And the King passed an ordonnance in council, that the number of deputies of the "*Tiers Etat*," should be limited to six hundred; and that of the higher Orders, to three hundred each. Thus was a question decided in favour of the people, of far

far greater importance than the Monarch and his confidential advisers had the most distant suspicion of.

On the 5th May 1789, the King of France opened the States-General in regular form, by a gracious speech from the throne. It was universally understood, that the Crown was prepared to make very considerable concessions in favour of the people, in return for the pecuniary aids which the urgent necessities of the State constrained the Sovereign to solicit, in order to avert the ruin which seemed impending over the kingdom. The royal writ for the convocation of the States, after a frank confession of the embarrassed state of the national finances, and some injunctions relative to the mode of electing the députés, expressly recommends, “ that the said deputies shall be furnished with instructions, and general powers, to propose, remonstrate, advise, and consent to everything which may concern the wants of the State, the reform of abuses, the establishment of a fixed and durable order in all the departments of the administration, the general prosperity of the kingdom, and the welfare of all and every one of our subjects— promising them to ask, and with a favourable ear to listen to the advice of the said States, upon every thing that can interest the welfare of our people; and to make such provisions in regard to the grievances and propositions which may be presented to us, that our kingdom, and all our subjects in particular, may experience for ever

the salutary effects which they have a right to promise themselves from such and so able an Assembly." The expectations of intelligent persons were now raised to the highest pitch of elevation, whether they contemplated the state of imbecility and dependency into which the Crown had actually fallen—or that illustrious combination of talents and virtues which the assembly of the States exhibited to their view—or the spirit and temper of the times, and those great attainments in every branch of speculative knowledge which had prepared the minds of men for the most daring political innovations, if conducive to real and practical improvements. Before the States could enter into the busines of the kingdom, it was necessary that each deputy should *verify his title*, as it was termed, or authenticate his deputation. And here the spirit by which the deputies of the Commons, or the *Tiers Etat*, was actuated, became at once fully apparent. They firmly insisted, that this verification should be made in one common assembly of the Three Orders united; and that all questions which might arise, should be decided by a majority, not of Orders, or of Bailiages, but of votes collected individually. This was a claim which totally and radically subverted the antient constitution; and it was resisted by the whole weight of regal influence, as well as by the peremptory declarations of the nobility and clergy in vindication of their rights and privileges, and reprobating in the strongest terms these alarming and

and dangerous innovations. In this critical situation matters continued for some weeks ; during which interval, the King proposed a plan of conciliation, agreeably to which, some questions were to be debated by all the different Orders in conjunction, and others in their separate assemblies. This was respectfully declined by the Commons, and haughtily rejected by the Nobility. The *Tiers Etat*, however, gradually gained ground, particularly amongst the clergy, who were probably sensible that the contest must finally terminate in their favour. And being strongly supported by the general voice of the People, and actually joined by about fifty of the Nobility, with the Duke of Orleans at their head, and nearly one half of the Clerical Order, they ventured, on the 17th June, to declare themselves the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. The King, highly offended at their rashness and presumption, immediately signified his pleasure to hold a royal session ; in which he declared, that the distinction of the Three Orders is essential to the antient constitution of the kingdom—and that the deputies from them, sitting in three chambers, but uniting occasionally with the approbation of the King, are the only legal representatives of the nation—that he annuls, as anti-constitutional, the resolutions passed in the assembly of the *Tiers Etat* on the 17th ; and concludes, “ I order you to meet to-morrow, each Order in its separate chamber, and resume your sessions.” On the morrow, however, the National Assembly continued

to exercise its functions, and even received an addition to its numbers. And on the 27th, the King found himself under a necessity of writing to the higher Orders to join the *Tiers Etat* in one common assembly, that the business of the nation might no longer be impeded. This was a great, but reluctant and precarious concession, extorted by fear, and easily revocable at the pleasure of the Monarch, who now began to listen to counsels which justly excited universal consternation. Neckar and Montmorin, the popular ministers, were dismissed. Troops were collecting from all quarters, and encampments forming in the environs of Paris and Versailles. This occasioned a most spirited and energetic remonstrance from the Assembly to the King, in which they complained, in language new to Kings of France, that the freedom of their deliberations was alarmingly and unconstitutionally interrupted: And they desired, or rather insisted, that the troops, which were composed of foreign as well as national regiments, might be remanded to their stations; and that a National guard might be raised in Paris and Versailles. In consequence of this intimation, the city of Paris immediately embodied a numerous corps, under the appellation of the National Guard; and the example of the metropolis was rapidly followed, by every considerable town throughout the kingdom. The King's answer to the remonstrance was evasive and unsatisfactory; and the passions of the people being violently inflamed, a

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most extraordinary and memorable insurrection took place in the city of Paris on the 14th July, when the fortres of the Bastille was stormed and captured by the citizens—the King's troops refusing obedience to the commands of their officers, and some even joining themselves to the insurgents. The Count D'Artois, and the other leaders of the aristocratic party, sought for safety in flight; and the King was compelled to throw himself upon the protection of the National Assembly. Neckar and Montmorin were re-instated in their offices, and a new administration formed. In consequence of this revolution in affairs, great excesses were committed by the populace, in all parts of the kingdom, upon the persons and properties of those who were supposed attached to the aristocratic party; and in numerous instances, outrages, shocking to humanity, were perpetrated. The National Assembly, and the Ministers of the Crown, endeavoured in vain to restrain the fury of these lawless plunderers and assassins, who seemed rather to aim at the subversion of all government, than the mere reformation of abuses. At length, however, the popular rage seemed exhausted by the violence of its own efforts, and the course of things seemed gradually tending to a regular and settled state. By the end of September, the Assembly had agreed upon the primary and essential articles of the new constitution, which were presented to the King, who did not indeed refuse the royal sanction, though dangerously accompanied with a *salvo* for

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“ the antient, essential; and constitutional prerogatives of the Crown.” When we consider the nature of these articles, we cannot wonder at the reluctance discovered by the Monarch to ratify them. They import, in substance —That the King is himself subject to the laws—that the legislative power is vested in the Assembly of the representatives of the nation—that the executive power alone resides in the person of the King, and that justice shall be administered in his name, but by tribunals not subject to his controul, according to the principles of the Constitution, and the forms determined by the Law. The reserve of the Monarch, however, was justly considered as a decisive proof of the secret prevalence of aristocratic counsels. And the Queen was universally charged with exerting all that influence which she was known to possess over the mind of the King, to persuade him to refuse, or qualify, his assent to the establishment of a free Constitution. Preparations were discovered to be in train, in order to facilitate the retreat of the King to Metz, where the royal standard was to be raised, as the signal for involving the nation in all the horrors of a civil war ; and the banished *aristocrates* were deeply engaged in various machinations for the advancement of this nefarious project. More than ever inflamed and enraged by this intelligence, another popular insurrection, of a nature still more astonishing and unparalleled than the former, took place October 6th, in which the palace of Versailles was actually besieged ; the

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King and Queen were made captives, and conducted in triumph to Paris ; and the place of the Tuilleries was assigned as the place of their future residence, where the Monarch is still guarded with jealous and unremitting vigilance. The effect of this violence on the person of the Sovereign, was an immediate, explicit, and unconditional acceptance on his part, of the articles of the Constitution formerly presented. And the National Assembly have ever since proceeded in an undisturbed, and uninterrupted progression, to carry into effect the grand and noble plan which they had concerted for the renovation of the French monarchy, and the establishment of a free and permanent Constitution.

It is well known, that the monarchy of France is composed of various rich and extensive provinces; which being formerly subject to the dominion of different Sovereigns, were united to the Crown of France at different periods, and under different limitations and conditions. These provinces, in consequence, claimed divers local and immemorial exemptions and privileges, little beneficial indeed to themselves, but highly detrimental to the community at large, as they formed an effectual bar to the complete coalescence, and consolidation, of the component parts of this great monarchy into one regular, and well-compacted whole. It was one of the first and greatest objects, therefore, of the National Assembly, to abolish for ever these pernicious exemptions, privileges, and feudal rights, the remains

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of a barbarous and Gothic policy, and to establish a system of perfect equalization and uniformity—a system, whose energy should pervade alike all the classes of the community, and all the dependencies of the empire. For this purpose, the whole kingdom was divided into nine regions, comprising eighty-three departments, subdivided into districts and cantons, somewhat analogous to circuits, counties, hundreds and tythings in England. The resident inhabitants of each canton, not paying less than the value of three days labour to the State in a direct tax, are empowered to meet once in two years to choose electors, in the proportion of one elector to every hundred voters. These electors are authorized to choose deputies to the great National Assembly, and also members to compose the inferior assemblies of department and district, to whom is committed the superintendance of the internal police of the kingdom. These Assemblies are permanent bodies, not dependent upon the will of the Monarch for the continuance of their existence—a periodical time being fixed, viz. every two years, for the re-election of members; and the old Assembly is not dissolved till the new election is completed. There is, however, this difference in the manner of renewing the members in the National and in the Subordinate Assemblies:—In the National Assembly, the period of delegation is restricted to two years; whereas, in the assemblies of department and district, one half only of the members are renewed in the biennial elections;

elections ; so that each member, except in the first assemblies, will continue four years in office. With regard to the number of deputies in these assemblies, as well as in the National Assembly, it is regulated by a *ternary ratio*—that is to say, the number of deputies to the National Assembly is the number of departments multiplied by nine, amounting to seven hundred and forty-seven deputies ; each assembly of department is to consist of thirty-six members, the assemblies of district of twelve each. These numbers are adopted for the purpose of making the representation of the kingdom correspond as nearly as possible to the three-fold relation, of extent of territory, population, and riches. Municipalities, also, in all the different towns and cities throughout the kingdom, were established upon the same principles of representation, in lieu of the antient corporate bodies, founded in ages of ignorance, and possessing powers and privileges incompatible with the general welfare. The Assembly having decreed, as a primary article of the new Constitution, that the judicial power should be for ever separated from the legislative and executive powers of the State, proceeded to determine, that juries should be instituted in criminal causes—that justice should be gratuitously administered to the people—and that the office of judge, in any court, should be no longer purchasable or hereditary. These measures having been received with a warmth of approbation which reflected the highest honour upon the nation at large,

large, the Assembly were emboldened to advance with vigorous steps towards the completion of the grand work of national reformation. The riches of the Gallican church were immense, and formed a most striking contrast to the distressed and impoverished condition of the State. The pomp and luxury which were almost universally prevalent amongst the highest ranks of the clergy; the corruption and abuses of various kinds which pervaded every part of the ecclesiastical system, had arrived to such an height, that it seemed to be scarcely recollect^{ed}, that the clergy were merely a class of citizens paid by the public, and appointed by the authority of the State to perform certain duties; and that the State possessed therefore an inherent right, in case of negligence, inability, or misconduct, to decree a general resumption of that branch of the public revenue which was destined for their support, and maintenance. This power the National Assembly now, thought it fit and expedient to exercise; and, by a decree of that body, the entire property of the Church was resumed by the State, in order to be appropriated to the public exigencies. A decent provision, however, was made for the parochial clergy; and to the bishops were allotted stipends not inadequate to their more elevated stations. But pluralities were totally abolished. The residence both of bishops and rectors was strictly enjoined. The offices also were made elective, and vested in the assemblies of department and district. Applications to the See of Rome for bulls

bulls of confirmation and investiture, were declared illegal—a simple notification to the Roman Pontiff as the first Christian Bishop, being henceforth the only mark of distinction to be paid to the Papal See. Finally, all monastic institutions were dissolved, and the prelates of the church divested of all the civil and temporal jurisdiction, and authority, annexed to their respective Sees. No change however was made, or even attempted, in the doctrinal articles of the church. The absurdities of the Roman Missal were still retained; and the National Assembly has wisely delayed, to a season of more leisure and security, a reformation of a nature perhaps more difficult and hazardous than any hitherto attempted. This great ecclesiastical reform being thus happily accomplished, the National Assembly next proceeded to the adoption of a measure which excited the astonishment of all Europe. This was no less than the immediate and total suppression of all titles of honour, armorial bearings, and hereditary distinctions of rank of every kind. It is remarkable, that this celebrated decree was carried in the National Assembly by a prodigious majority of voices—that it was warmly supported by the Duc de Montmorenci, the head of the most illustrious family perhaps in France—and that it was received by the nation with unbounded demonstrations of joy, as one of the noblest sacrifices which had yet been made at the altar of Liberty. At length, the attention of the Assembly was directed to the state of

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the public finances, the dreadful derangement of which was the immediate cause of its being convened—the annual *deficit* of the public revenue being, according to the report of M. Neckar, no less than fifty-six millions of livres. In this arduous business little progress appeared to have been made till the recent decree of the Assembly, which enacted, that *assignats*, to the amount of 1200 millions of livres, should be issued, in order to the liquidation of that proportion of the public debt, under the sanction and authority of the National Assembly, which should bear no interest, but which should be deemed a legal tender in all payments, and should be received by Government in lieu of specie for the lands, tithes, and other ecclesiastical property, to be disposed of by commissioners appointed for that purpose, to the use and benefit of the community;—in consequence of which provision, it was supposed that the far greater part of this enormous emission of paper-currency would speedily revert to the national exchequer; and as the *assignats* are from time to time paid into the Treasury, it is directed that they shall be publicly burnt. And from the report of M. de Rochefoucault, chairman of the Committee of Finances, presented to the Assembly in the month of December last (1790), the most pleasing prospects open, of future and permanent prosperity.

Upon a candid and impartial review of the acts and proceedings of the Assembly, it must be acknowledged,

knowledged, that so great, so extensive, and so beneficial a reformation, has never before been attempted by any nation ; and that in the short space of time which has elapsed since it was convened, more has been accomplished for the glory and happiness of the community, than could previously have been imagined possible for the highest efforts of wisdom and perseverance to effect. Yet were there not wanting persons, even in France, who eagerly embraced every opportunity to cast obloquy and reproach upon the conduct of this illustrious Assembly of legislators and patriots—who affected to deride them as mere political visionaries, and romantic speculatists—who employed that time in idle debates, and abstract discussions, which ought to have been wholly devoted to the settlement of the affairs of the nation, and the restoration of public order and tranquillity. Though these malignant and seditious charges made little impression upon the great mass of the people, who placed the utmost confidence in the talents and virtues of those enlightened and faithful citizens, by whose counsels the Assembly was principally guided, yet that body thought it incumbent upon them to vindicate themselves from these injurious imputations, by a very judicious and animated address to the Nation at large, in which they recapitulate the steps they have taken in order to accomplish the purposes of their delegation, and with an openness, generosity, and candour, worthy the representatives of a great and free people, ex-

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plain their sentiments respecting the general situation of the kingdom ; and the measures which it will still be necessary to adopt for its final and complete emancipation. " What," say they, " has been left unassayed by our enemies to mislead you, and to shake your confidence in us ? What good, do they affect to ask, has the Assembly done ? We answer—It has traced, with a firm and steady hand, and in the midst of dangers and tumults, the principles of the Constitution which secures your liberty for ever. The rights of man have been for ages misunderstood by the people, and insulted by their rulers. They have been re-established for all mankind in that declaration, which will remain as a perpetual bond of union for the people against their oppressors, and even as a rule for legislators themselves. Numberless particular privileges, those irreconcileable enemies of the public good, composed the whole of our national law. These are destroyed : and at the voice of your Assembly, those provinces that were most tenacious of their own privileges, have applauded their downfall, and have felt themselves enriched by the loss. An oppressive feudal system, powerful even in its last remains, extended itself throughout France—it has disappeared, never to return. You have long desired that the venality of offices in the magistracy should be abolished : This has been decreed. You stood in fear of the power of ministers : We have, for your security, imposed on them the law of responsibility. In fine, the finances

finances demanded immense reforms: Seconded by the Minister, who has obtained your confidence, we have made them our unremitting study, and you will soon reap the fruit of our labours.

What an æra is this to which we are at length arrived! How honourable an inheritance have you to transmit to your posterity! Elevated to the rank of citizens, admissible to all employments; enlightened censors of public affairs, when not actually engaged in the conduct of them; equals in the eye of the law, free to act, to speak, to write, amenable to the public only; What condition can be conceived happier, or more honourable, than yours? Is there a single citizen worthy of that name, who can look back with regret on the past state of things, or who would gather up the ruins with which we are surrounded, in order to reconstruct the antient edifice? and yet, What has not been said, what has not been done by our enemies, to weaken in you the impression which such blessings ought naturally to excite? They accuse us of having aspired at a chimerical perfection. Under this disguise, how easy to discover the secret wish for the perpetuity of abuses. The National Assembly are vilified, because they had the sense and courage to believe that all useful ideas, and truths most necessary to the happiness of mankind, were not exclusively destined to adorn the pages of a book. It is impossible," say they, "to regenerate an old and corrupted nation—Why should we answer so wretched a reproach? Shall

the National Assembly be reduced to excuse itself for not having despaired of the people of France? Nothing has yet been done for the people—Even this has been impudently asserted. Nothing done for the people! Is it not the people's cause which triumphs in every change? Does not every abuse, which has been destroyed, prepare the way for the ease and relief of the people? But their condition is now wretched—Say rather, it is still wretched. But it shall not be so long—**WE SWEAR IT SHALL NOT.** We have, it is said, destroyed the executive power—On the contrary, the executive power is enlightened and ennobled by us. In opposition to the Law and Constitution, it is now indeed without force; but when employed in their defence, more powerful than ever. The people are armed.—Yes, for their defence. But popular excesses, tumults, and bloodshed, have flowed from this source. Can these evils be imputed to your representatives? Can the Assembly be justly reproached for disasters which it laments? which it used every means in its power to prevent, and which will soon cease, by the union of the two powers, from henceforth indissoluble; and by the irresistible action of the united strength of the nation. We have exceeded our powers.—The answer is obvious and simple. We were incontestably delegated to make a Constitution. This was the desire, it was the want avowed and called for by all France. Was it possible to create this Constitution, without the plenitude of powers which

which we have exercised ? The numerous addressees of adhesions presented from all parts of the kingdom, the avowals of homage, the oaths of the citizens—What a confirmation are they of the powers which our enemies would contest with us ! The clergy, citizens also, equally distant from the extremes of poverty or riches, will, under the new Constitution, cause religion to be cherished ; they will increase its influence, by cultivating a closer and more affectionate connection between the people and their pastors. This sacred body will no longer exhibit the spectacle, which the patriotism of some of its own members has lamented in this Assembly, of opulent idleness, and unrecompensed activity. Behold ! O people of France, the prospect of happiness that lies before you ! Some few steps more remain to be trodden in this career of labours. Guard, during this interval, against the impulse of your natural impetuosity. Dread, above all things, the commission of violence, than which nothing can be imagined so fatal to Liberty. Bear in your minds the three sacred words, The Nation, the Law, and the King. The Nation, that is yourselves—the Law, which is the voice of the Nation—and the King, who is the guardian of the Law. Hearken not to those who speak of two parties—there is but one. We have all sworn it ; and it is that of Liberty. As long as her victory is secure, attested by new conquests every day, let these vile detractors pour out their injurious calumnies against us. Reflect only, that if they prevailed us, France would be undone.”

Who could have imagined, that this glorious revolution, so favourable to the general interests of Liberty, and the natural rights of humanity, should, in a country which professes the most ardent and zealous attachment to Liberty, have been viewed, not merely with jealous, but malignant eyes! Yet it is certain, that England, upon this great and interesting occasion, has not discovered in her public conduct the national characteristics of generosity or magnanimity; and that, in the most courtly and fashionable circles, the French Revolution has, for the most part, been spoken of in terms of affected scorn and contempt. So apparent, indeed, was the coldness and disgust with which it was received amongst us, that a very general apprehension pervaded the minds of the people of France, that England was disposed to convert to her own advantage, and to the purposes of her own ambition, the temporary anarchy in which they were involved. This, however, obtained a reluctant credit with the higher and more enlightened ranks of the community. "Who will interpose," exclaimed a Member of the National Assembly, "to prevent the establishment of a free Constitution in France? Not you, O brave and gallant Nation, who have shed seas of blood in defence of your own Liberty!" and it must be acknowledged, that not even the Court, and much less the Parliament, or the People, were inclined to adopt so barbarous and detestable a policy. Still it was observable, that a long and sullen silence prevailed in the English Parliament

Parliament on this subject—that it was studiously shunned and deprecated in the language of mystery, as a topic which could not be made the theme of public discussion without extreme rashness, and danger. At length the period arrived, when this pretended danger ceased to excite alarm even in the breast of a courtier.

On the first day of the Session, January 1790, Lord Valletort, who moved the Address in the House of Commons, in answer to the Speech from the Throne, took occasion to contrast the tranquil and prosperous situation of England with the anarchy and licentiousness of France, and to stigmatize the Revolution in that kingdom as an event the most disastrous, and productive of consequences the most fatal, which had ever taken place since the foundation of that monarchy. “ My-Lord Valletort,” says a spirited French Writer, in allusion to his speech, “ Ne risqueroit cependant rien en venant en France que la mortification, de voir par lui-même la fausseté de son tableau, celle d’être accueilli par ceux qu’il a si indignement calomnié, celle enfin de sentir la distance immense qu’il y a, entre la générosité & l’injustice.”

The sentiments of his Lordship, however, were highly applauded by the Minister, *and the King’s friends*, and seemed indeed not unacceptable to the majority of the members of the House. In the space of a few weeks, the subject was again revived, and in a mode which excited much more of the public attention. Upon the debate which

took place relative to the army estimates, Mr. Burke argued in favour of a reduction of the peace establishment, from that state of perfect security which the Nation at present enjoyed—professing, that on a review of all Europe, he did not find, that, politically, we stood in the smallest degree of danger from any one state or kingdom it contained ; nor that any foreign powers, but our own allies, were likely to obtain a preponderance in the scale. “ France,” said Mr. Burke, “ has hitherto been our first object in all considerations concerning the balance of power. But France is at this time, in a political light, to be considered as expunged out of the system of Europe.” Whether she could ever appear in it again as a leading power, was not easy to determine. But, at present, he considered France as not politically existing ; and most assuredly it would take much time to restore her to her former active existence. *Gallos quoque in bellis floruisse audivimus*, might possibly be the language of the rising generation. It was said, as she had speedily fallen, she might speedily rise again.—He doubted this. The fall from an height was with an accelerated velocity—but to lift a weight up to that height again was difficult, and opposed by the laws of physical and political gravitation. In a political view, France was low indeed : She had lost every thing, even to her name.

—Jacet ingens littore truncus,
Avolsumque humeris caput, & sine nomine corpus.

He

He was astonished at it—he was alarmed at it—he trembled at the uncertainty of all human greatness. The French had shewn themselves the ablest architects of ruin that had hitherto appeared in the world. In one short summer, they had completely pulled down to the ground, their Monarchy, their Church, their Nobility, their Law, their Army, and their Revenue. Were we absolute conquerors, and France to lie prostrate at our feet, we should blush to impose upon them terms so destructive of all their consequence as a Nation, as the durance they had imposed upon themselves. In the last age, we were in danger of being entangled by the example of France, in the net of a relentless despotism—a despotism, indeed, proudly arrayed in manners, gallantry, splendour, magnificence, and even covered over with the imposing robes of science and literature. Our present danger, from the example of a people whose character knows no medium, is, with regard to government, a danger from licentious violence—a danger of being led from admiration, to imitation of the excesses of an unprincipled, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy—of a people whose government is anarchy, and whose religion is atheism. Mr. Burke pronounced the French nation very unwise. What they valued themselves upon, was, in his opinion, a disgrace to them. They had gloried, and some people in England had thought fit to take share in that glory, in making a revolution. All the horrors, and all the crimes

of

of the anarchy which led to this Revolution, which attend its progress, and which may eventually result from its establishment, pass for nothing. The French have made their way through the destruction of their country, to a bad constitution, when they were absolutely in possession of a good one. Instead of redressing grievances, and improving the fabric of their State, to which they were called by their Monarch, and sent by their country, they had rashly destroyed all the balances and counterpoizes which serve to fix the State, and to give it a steady direction. These they had melted down into one incongruous, ill-connected mass; and with the most atrocious perfidy and violation of all faith among men, laid the axe to the root of all property, and consequently of all national prosperity, by the principles they established, and the example they set, in confiscating all the possessions of the Church. They had made and recorded a sort of institute and digest of anarchy, called “ A Declaration of the Rights of Man;” thus systematically destroying every hold of authority, by opinion religious or civil, on the minds of the people. By this *mad Declaration* *, they had subverted the State; and brought

* In order to form an impartial judgment, whether the National Assembly, or Mr. Burke, is most justly chargeable with making a *mad declaration*; it will be necessary to peruse with attention, this “ Institute and digest of anarchy,” to adopt the words of the orator, as here subjoined.

brought on such calamities, as no country, without a long war, had ever been known to suffer. Mr. Burke

" THE representatives of the people of FRANCE, formed into a National Assembly, considering that ignorance, neglect or contempt of human rights, are the sole causes of public misfortunes and corruptions of government, HAVE RESOLVED as in the presence of the Supreme Being, and confiding in his blessing and favour, to recognize and declare the following sacred and unalienable rights of men and citizens :

I. Men were born, and always continue, free, and equal with respect to their rights. Civil distinctions, therefore, can be founded only on public utility.

II. The end of all political associations, is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. And these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

III. The Nation is essentially the source of all sovereignty; nor can any individual, or any body of men, be entitled to any authority which is not expressly derived from it.

IV. Political liberty consists in the power of doing whatever does not injure another. The exercise of the natural rights of every man, has no other limits than those which are necessary to secure to every other man the free exercise of the same rights; and these limits are determinable only by the law.

V. The law ought to prohibit only actions hurtful to society. What is not prohibited by the law, should not be hindered; nor should any one be compelled to what the law does not require.

VI. The law is an expression of the will of the community. All citizens have a right to concur, either personally, or by their representatives, in its formation. It should be the same to all, whether it protects or punishes. And all being equal in its sight, are equally eligible to all honours, places and employments, according to their different abilities, without any other distinction than that created by their virtues and talents.

VII. No

Burke declared, that he felt some concern, that this strange thing called a Revolution in France, should

VII. No man should be accused, arrested, or held in confinement, except in cases determined by the law, and according to the forms which it has prescribed. All who promote, solicit, execute, or cause to be executed, arbitrary mandates, ought to be punished. And every citizen called upon, or apprehended by the law, ought immediately to obey, and renders himself culpable by resistance.

VIII. The law ought to impose no other penalties than such as are absolutely and evidently necessary: and no one ought to be punished, but in virtue of a law promulgated before the offence, and legally applied.

IX. Every man being presumed innocent till he has been convicted, whenever his detention becomes indispensable, all rigour to him, more than is necessary to secure his person, ought to be strictly provided against by the law.

X. No man ought to be molested on account of his opinions, not even on account of his religious opinions, provided his avowal of them does not disturb the public order established by the law.

XI. The unrestrained communication of thoughts and opinions, being one of the most precious rights of man, every citizen may speak, write, and publish freely, provided he is responsible for the abuses of this liberty in cases determined by the law.

XII. A public force being necessary to give security to the rights of men and citizens, that force is instituted for the benefit of the community, and not for the particular benefit of the persons with whom it is entrusted.

XIII. A common contribution being necessary for the support of the public force, and for defraying the other expences of government, it ought to be divided equally among the members of the community, according to their abilities.

XIV. Every citizen has a right, either by himself, or his representative, to a free voice in determining the necessity of public

Should be compared with the glorious event commonly called the Revolution in England. In truth, the circumstances of our Revolution, as it is called, and that of France, are just the reverse of each other, in almost every particular, and in the whole spirit of the transaction. What we did, was in truth and substance, and in a constitutional light, not a Revolution made, but prevented. We took solid securities. We settled doubtful questions. We corrected anomalies in our Law. In the stable fundamental parts of our constitution, we made no Revolution; no, nor any alteration at all. We did not impair the monarchy. The Nation kept the same ranks, the same subordinations, the same franchises, the same order in the law, the revenue, and the magistracy; the same public contributions, the appropriation of them, and their amount, mode of assessment, and duration.

XV. Every community has a right to demand of all its agents, an account of their conduct.

XVI. Every community in which the separation of powers is not determined, nor a security of rights provided for, wants a constitution.

XVII. The right to property being inviolable and sacred, no one ought to be deprived of it, except in cases of evident public necessity, legally ascertained, and upon condition of a previous and just indemnity."

—Does there exist a man so lost to all sense of shame and decency, as to pretend that *these* are principles which it is disgraceful to a nation to avow?—or so miserably blinded with prejudice, as to fancy that they lead to anarchy, and must terminate in ruin?

" Who but must laugh, if such an one there be?

" Who would not weep, if ATTICUS were he?"

Lords,

Lords, the same Commons, the same Corporations, the same Electors. The Church was not impaired. Her estates, her majesty, her splendor, her orders and gradations continued the same. She was preserved in her full efficiency, and cleared only of that intolerance which was her weakness and disgrace. Was little done then, because a Revolution was not made in the Constitution? No—every thing was done; because we commenced with reparation, not with ruin. Instead of lying in a sort of epileptic trance, exposed to the pity or derision of the world, for her wild, ridiculous, convulsive movements, the State flourished; Great Britain rose above the standard of her former self. All the energies of the country were awakened; and a new era of prosperity commenced, which still continues, not only unimpaired, but receiving growth and improvement under the wasting hand of time."

It would be superfluous labour, after the statement of facts already made, to attempt a formal confutation of this wild and extravagant, however eloquent declamation—this impetuous torrent of invective. It is plain that Mr. Burke's imagination was violently inflamed, by the recent accounts of the popular outrages, and excesses in France; which, for a time, were indeed dreadful—"Effects unhappy, from a noble cause!" We hear of ten thousand lives lost in a battle, the wretched victims of imperial pride and ambition, almost without emotion—whilst the barbarous execution of a comparatively

comparatively inconsiderable number of persons, sacrificed to the suspicion or vengeance of the people, related with all the concomitant circumstances of distress, strikes us with horror. But if we are destitute of that firmness and energy of mind, which are necessary to the success of any grand, or elevated undertaking—if our feelings for the sufferings of individuals are so exquisite as to absorb and extinguish our feelings for the sufferings of our country, let us resign ourselves tamely to our fate. Content with secretly sighing for the blessings of Freedom, let us bow down at the altar of Despotism, and prostrate ourselves at the feet of our oppressors; for resistance will certainly be productive of discord, of confusion, and bloodshed. But is it thus that Liberty has been worshipped in this country?—LIBERTY! the mountain goddess who scorns the velvet step of smooth savannas, who wields a gory anlace, and waves a crimson banner, assuredly requires from her votaries a more ardent and enthusiastic devotion.

Thee, GODDESS, thee ! Britannia's isle adores ;
 How oft has she exhausted all her stores !
 How oft in fields of death thy presence fought !
 Nor thinks the mighty prize too dearly bought.

The timid and ignoble sentiments of Mr. Burke, however, received from the Minister the warmest tribute of admiration and applause. And Mr. Pitt expressed his entire concurrence with Mr. Burke, in every thing that he had advanced, relative to the late transactions in France. But Mr. Fox, in

justice to the rectitude of his own sentiments, and the dignity of his character, thought it incumbent upon him, though with manifest tenderness and compassion for the infirmity of his friend, at whose conduct he professed himself grieved and ashamed, explicitly to declare his total dissent from opinions so hostile to the general principles of Liberty. He vindicated the conduct of the French army, in refusing to act against their fellow-citizens, from the aspersions of Mr. Burke, who had charged them with abetting an abominable sedition, by mutiny and desertion—declaring, that “if he could view a standing military force with less constitutional jealousy than before, it was owing to the noble spirit manifested by the French army; who, on becoming soldiers, had proved that they did not forfeit their character as citizens, and would not act as the mere instruments of a despot. The scenes of bloodshed and cruelty that had been acted in France, no man, said Mr. Fox, could hear of without lamenting. But when the grievous tyranny that the people had so long groaned under was considered, the excesses they had committed in their efforts to shake off the yoke, could not excite our astonishment, so much as our regret. And as to the contrast which Mr. Burke affected to point out, respecting the mode in which the two Revolutions in England and France were effected, Mr. Fox most justly observed, that the situation of the two kingdoms was totally different. In France, a free constitution was to be created; in England,

it wanted only to be secured. If the fabric of Government in England suffered less alteration, it was because it required less alteration. If a general destruction of the antient constitution had taken place in France, it was because the whole system was radically hostile to Liberty, and that every part of it breathed the direful spirit of Despotism."

Mr. Sheridan, with still more animation, and less reserve than Mr. Fox, reprobated the political sentiments which had been that night advanced by Mr. Burke. "The people of France," said Mr. Sheridan, "it is true, have committed acts of barbarity and bloodshed, which have justly excited detestation and abhorrence. That detestation and abhorrence, however, are still more justly due to the government of France, prior to the Revolution—the tyranny and oppрession of which had deprived the people of the rights of men and of citizens, and driven them to that degree of desperation, which could alone have incited those unexampled acts of cruelty and revenge, which had been practised in the first agitation and violence of the effort to regain their freedom. Could it be expected, that men in their situation should be capable of acting with the same moderation, and the same attention to humanity and sensibility, as characterized freemen? Were the mad outrages of a mob an adequate ground for branding the National Assembly, with the stigma of being a bloody, ferocious, and tyrannical democracy? It was a

libel on that illustrious body, thus to describe them. A better constitution than that which actually existed, it is allowed that France had a right to expect. From whom were they to receive it? From the bounty of the Monarch, at the head of his courtiers? or from the patriotism of Marshal Broglie, at the head of the army? From the faint and feeble cries emitted from the dark dungeons of the Bastille? or from the influence and energy of that spirit which had laid the Bastille in ashes? The people, unhappily misguided, as they doubtless were, in particular instances, had however acted rightly in their great object. They had placed the supreme authority of the community in those hands by whom alone it could be justly exercised, and had reduced their Sovereign to the rank which properly belonged to Kings—that of administrator of the laws established by the free consent of the community."

It is remarkable, that at the very time Mr. Burke was aiming his impotent, though envenomed shafts, against the measures of the National Assembly, the King of France repaired publicly and voluntarily to the Assembly in person, in order to declare in the most solemn manner his perfect approbation of their proceedings, and to give the world a convincing proof of the cordiality with which he concurred with them in the arduous task of forming a constitution upon the most solid and extensive basis of freedom. "Livrons-nous," said this mild and beneficent Monarch, "de bonne foi aux esperances que

que nous devons concevoir. Continuez vos travaux—Qu'on fache que le Monarque y applaudit—J'aurai bien des pertes à compter; mais je trouverai mon bonheur dans celui de la nation. C'est du fond de mon cœur que j'exprime ce sentiment. Je maintiendrai la constitution de tout mon pouvoir. Puisse cette journée où votre monarque vient se réunir à vous, réunir encore tous les esprits. Je les dédommagerai par mes bontés.”

Though the extreme virulence and malignity manifested by the calumniators of the Revolution in France, cannot but excite the contempt and indignation of the more liberal and enlightened part of mankind; yet I trust it will not be thought to derogate from its merits, calmly and dispassionately to investigate this grand and beautiful model of government, the perfection perhaps of human wisdom and policy, in order to mark with candour and impartiality those inconveniences and defects, from which no work of man can reasonably be supposed entirely exempted. The division of the kingdom into departments and districts, and the establishment of popular assemblies in each, appears happily calculated to infuse animation and energy into every part of the political system. And I particularly admire that regulation, by which the citizens at large are to exercise the right of representation, through the medium of a previous delegation of electors; by which means the tumults and popular excesses attending the generality of elections in England, will be effectually precluded.

I do not, however, perceive the wisdom or propriety of the article, which enacts, that no deputy shall be eligible in two successive legislatures. It seems to me, an oppressive restraint on the freedom of choice on the part of the people; and it may also deprive the State of the services of her ablest and most intelligent members, perhaps at the very period when they might be productive of the greatest utility*. The union of Orders in the National Assembly, must be acknowledged a measure of indispensable necessity, when the object in view was to form a constitution: Because the opposition which the Commons, or *Tiers Etat*, would certainly have encountered from the superior Orders, in accomplishing that great work, must doubtless have rendered all their attempts abortive. When the constitution however was actually formed, the re-establishment of the Order of Nobles might have answered the same beneficial purposes in France, as we find by experience to result from the intervention of an House of Peers in England; who, without possessing a degree of power very formidable in itself, are able to hold the balance between the other branches of the legislature, and to oppose a firm and permanent barrier to the attacks of regal power, or, which is indeed their more immediate and constitutional province, to the encroachments of democratic

* I understand with pleasure, that this regulation, which was adopted by the Committee of Constitution, has been ultimately rejected by the Assembly.

ambition.

ambition. In order, however, to preclude even the possibility of the re-establishment of this obnoxious, but I think useful and salutary check, the National Assembly have, by a bold and decisive measure, annihilated all hereditary titles of honour, and distinctions of rank, throughout the kingdom: —thus, to adopt the allusion of a celebrated writer, destroying the symmetry of that beautiful pyramid, of which, in a well-ordered State, the people may be considered as the base; and which gradually rises through the more elevated ranks and orders of the community, till it arrives at its proper termination in the person of the Sovereign. Another defect in the new constitution of France appears to me to be, the absolute exclusion of the ministers of the Crown from any place in the National Assembly. In England, the Monarch is not only enjoined by the principles of the constitution, to carry into execution the measures determined upon by the representatives of the community; but he is allowed, and even expected, through the medium of the great officers of State sitting in Parliament, to propose such public measures as it may be proper for the legislature to adopt. This completes the harmony, and consolidates the union of the different powers of government. And if the Parliament were indeed a real, adequate, and impartial representative of the nation, and under no corrupt or secret influence of the Crown, this appears incomparably the most easy, eligible, and efficacious mode of conducting

public business. For, who so well qualified to propose public measures, as those who occupy the highest departments of the State; and who, under a well-constituted government, must be supposed possessed of talents and virtues equal to their stations—who must, in fact, be entrusted with the execution of those measures, and who are considered as finally responsible for the effects of them? The National Assembly of France, however, have, I think unhappily, adopted a policy founded on different principles. Deliberation is, as they conceive, the sole province of the legislative power; and action, that of the executive. And the intervention or influence of the Sovereign, relative to the decisions of the legislature, are guarded against by every precaution that the most anxious policy can suggest. The inevitable result of this constitution, must be the final and total dis-union of the different powers of government. There is no visible bond of connection. The ministers of the Crown, I might say the Crown itself, must sink into a state of imbecility and contempt. Committees will be instituted by the Assembly, to whom the entire functions of the executive power will be gradually transferred. For, will the passions of men, and the secret suggestions of pride and ambition, in circumstances so favourable to their gratification, ever cease to operate? The orders of the Sovereign will become a mere matter of form, and will only be issued in compliance with the addresses of the Assembly. The Monarch will be regarded

regarded as a mere pageant of State. An irresistible tendency to republicanism will soon become apparent. Monarchy will be at first virtually, and at length, perhaps, openly and avowedly annihilated. But here a question of the utmost moment and importance arises: To whom is, or will, the command of the army be entrusted by the new constitution of France? To whom can it be entrusted, but to the King, as supreme executive magistrate? But, will the King patiently submit to be divested of his civil authority, and to be reduced to a mere cypher in the State, so long as his military authority remains unimpaired? Are not the seeds of future division and discord implanted in this system? And when division and discord arise to a certain height of animosity, with how much facility a sudden and total change of government may be effected by the aid of the military, the Swedish revolution affords a recent and memorable instance: And this beautiful and lofty fabric, reared as it were by enchantment, the brilliant illusion of a day, is destined perhaps to dissolve into air, when touched by the spear of some political Ithuriel. Absolute unqualified distrust of the Monarch, is the characteristic of the new constitution of France. A guarded confidence in the Monarch, is the characteristic of the constitution of England; which presumes, that the King, who can act only by the intervention of ministers approved by the representatives of the people, and under the controul of the people, and respon-

ble to the people, can harbour no designs inimical to the State. This, as a theoretical principle, I think wise and just ; and if the representation of the people were in reality what it is in name, it would be equally safe and beneficial as a practical one. In England, the King is incessantly and actively employed in directing the evolutions of the vessel of the State. In France, he seems a kind of remora, which continually counteracts its movements, and impedes its course. Agreeably to the general theory, to which I have given a decided preference, it is scarcely necessary to add, that the Crown of France ought to have been invested with an absolute negative upon the acts of the Assembly, instead of the suspensive *veto* allotted to it by the present constitution : For, it is not to be imagined, that, under such a constitution, the Sovereign would ever be disposed to exert his negative, but in cases of a direct attack upon the essential prerogatives of the Crown. I should be extremely happy to find myself eventually mistaken in these apprehensions. But though I admit the great superiority of the new constitution of France to that of England, in many striking points ; yet in this most important respect, the latter has, I think, manifestly the advantage—that in her general plan of government, England adapts her political provisions to the nature and passions of men, as they actually are, while France appears to consider them only, or chiefly, as they ought to be. If the National Assembly of France was composed of men not subject

ject to human frailty, no attempts would ever be made to encroach on the province of the executive power. If the Kings of France were always generous and disinterested patriots, they would not wish to direct or influence the conduct of the legislative body, but would be satisfied with the glory of executing their decrees. As neither of these suppositions however are very probable, I conceive that form of government to be more eligible which has opposed insuperable barriers to any encroachments of the legislative upon the executive power ; and which, admitting, and even authorizing the executive power to exert an high degree of influence over the determinations of the legislative body, is solicitous only to prevent that influence from being perverted to pernicious or unconstitutional purposes.

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Since these Remarks were written, the public curiosity has been gratified by the appearance of the celebrated and long-expected Reflections of Mr. Burke on the late Revolution in France. They appear to me to breathe the genuine spirit of a haughty *aristocrate* ; and, notwithstanding the lapse of time, they exhibit in colours more glowing than even his famous parliamentary invective, the features, scarcely shaded, of inveterate prejudice, and ungoverned passion ; through the medium of which, all objects, howeyer fair, appear to the mental eye distorted and deformed—“ All monstrous, all prodigious

prodigious things," the chimeras dire of a distempered imagination. The radical positions of Mr. Burke are these:—That the political constitution of France was, previous to the Revolution, a good one—very nearly as good as could be wished—although the lives and fortunes of thirty millions of people were subjected by it to the arbitrary will and pleasure of one man:—That this good constitution might have been farther meliorated and reformed, and even new-modelled, agreeably to the principles of the English constitution, without danger or difficulty:—That the new constitution of France is destructive of the public order, and incompatible with the public happiness. And in his eager attempts to establish these strange positions, he is chargeable with the most egregious ignorance, or the grossest misrepresentation both of facts and principles. “The King,” says he, “from the beginning, surrendered all pretence to “the right of taxation. Upon a free constitution “there was but one opinion in France. The absolute monarchy was at an end. It breathed its “last without a groan, without struggle, without “convulsion. All the struggle, all the dissention, “arose afterwards upon the preference of despotic “democracy to a government of reciprocal concord. The triumph of the victorious party was “over the principles of a British constitution.” Is it possible? Yes—and for the truth of these pre-emptory charges we may rely upon the authority of Mr. Burke, who does not indeed favour us either

either with facts or arguments in support of his assertions, but who assumes, and, to do him justice, admirably maintains that lofty and imperious tone of declamation which, with the majority of readers, at least for the moment, answers the purpose much better. "The King, from the beginning,"—but of what period? "surrendered all pretence to the right of taxation." How noble and generous to surrender what he had in vain used every means in his power to enforce, and what all France knew it was no longer possible for him to retain! When this claim was surrendered, however, the absolute monarchy was, in Mr. Burke's opinion, at an end. Still the legislative, the judicial, the executive powers were united in the person of the Monarch. And a constitution in which the Monarch possesses all the powers of government, the power of taxation excepted, is in fact the very worst species of despotism. And this, as Mr. Hume has justly observed, is the actual situation of the government of Turkey; in which the imposition of a new tax is contrary to the express injunctions of the Koran, and the Sultan is therefore under the necessity of replenishing his treasures by acts of the most dreadful and destructive individual oppression. The right of taxation, when exercised by the representatives of any nation, may indeed, and probably will, be made the instrument of establishing a free constitution: And to the accomplishment of this greatest and most laudable of all purposes, the National Assembly of France invariably endeavoured to employ this new acquisition of

of authority. In the space of a few months, they had formed the general plan of a constitution, in which the executive, legislative, and judicial powers, were for ever separated from each other by permanent and irrevocable limits. So far, perhaps, Mr. Burke will have the candour to admit, that they adopted the principles, and acted in conformity to the spirit of the English constitution. And it is notorious, that it was the King's refusal to ratify these fundamental principles of all just government, and the well-founded belief of a determination in the Court, to resist, by force of arms, these formidable attacks upon the prerogative which gave rise to the ever memorable insurrection of October 6th, which, dreadful and sanguinary as were many of the circumstances attending it, and which Mr. Burke has painted with the dark and savage pencil of a Spagnole, doubtless averted from the nation the calamities of a civil war, in which it was manifestly on the eve of being plunged. And a spectacle was presented to the world, in which, though pity claimed a mingled part, there was certainly ample scope for exultation and triumph. From that day, the opposition of the Monarch to the will of the Nation ceased; the victory of Liberty was secured; and the fabric of a new and glorious Constitution was cemented in the blood of its enemies. Who, that possessed an heart which vibrated in unison with the noblest feelings of our nature, and who was capable of extending his views beyond the limits of a day, could

could hesitate to rejoice, even amidst scenes the most disastrous and afflictive to humanity, to see “a great and mighty people, indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice—their King led in triumph, and an arbitrary Monarch surrenderring himself to his subjects?” These are the emphatic expressions of Dr. Price, in his celebrated Revolution sermon: and for this animated and generous effusion of patriotic fervour, this illustrious Philanthropist is vilified, and scurrilously abused by Mr. Burke, as a second Hugh Peters—or, to collect a few of Mr. Burke’s scattered flowers of eloquence, as a fanatical, sacrilegious, inhuman, unprincipled, remorseless regicide. Without doubt, the heads of Barnave, Bailli, Syeyes, and other distinguished ornaments of the National Assembly, streaming on the scaffold, would have formed a spectacle far more congenial to the refined feelings of Mr. Burke, who would rejoice to see “ten thousand swords leap from their scabbards;” nay, all France deluged in blood, rather than a look, which threatened insult to the Queen of France, that paragon of female virtue and excellence, should pass unrevenged; and who cannot contemplate, as we are all sensible, a Monarch “hurled from his throne,” without the most exquisite emotions of grief and commiseration. But Mr. Burke assures us, that “resistance was made to concession; their revolt was from protection; their blow was aimed at a hand holding out graces, favours,

favours, and immunities." And elsewhere, speaking of the admiration, rising almost to idolatry, which the people of France entertain for the memory of Henry IV. he asserts, " that Louis XVI. whom they have *dethroned*, has, in the course of his reign, done infinitely more to correct the ancient vices of the State, than that great Monarch did, or than we are sure he ever meant to do." We have all heard, I presume, with admiration, of the great things performed by Henry IV. and of the still greater which, if any credit is due to the Duke of Sully, he had in contemplation. But of the infinitely greater things performed, or meditated by the present King, for the welfare of the State, I acknowledge myself perfectly ignorant. Nor does that famous record of modern French history, the "*Livre Rouge*," furnish, as I recollect, a single proof of this extraordinary assertion. The convocation of the States was a measure, not of choice, but of dire and urgent necessity. And though, with respect to general rectitude of disposition, it would be injustice to affirm, that Louis XVI. falls below the level of the Kings his predecessors or co-temporaries, yet it is a melancholy truth, that the people may suffer as much under the government of a weak, as of a wicked prince. And the political concessions which he was prepared to make, in return for the pecuniary aids which he solicited, fell prodigiously short of that radical and permanent reform which the people had a right to demand,

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and which they also happily possessed the power to enforce. The King of France is not, and never was, the object of the national hatred or vengeance. No Monarch could reasonably be expected voluntarily to divest himself of the authority transmitted to him from his ancestors. But neither could the Representatives of a great and enlightened Nation be expected to divest themselves of their feelings as men and citizens ; nor, from a weak and vicious complaisance to the hereditary prejudices of royalty, to act in a manner incompatible with the sacred obligations incumbent upon them as such, and with the high character they sustained as the assertors of the national liberty. In consequence of the heroic exertions which the spirit of Liberty only could inspire, absolute monarchy has, indeed, to adopt the words of Mr. Burke, “ breathed its last ” in France—but not, as he asserts, without a groan. No. It expired in convulsions too dreadful to be lasting. But Mr. Burke is an admirer of quiet and peaceable revolutions. If daring metaphors would supply the place of daring actions, he would be the first to exclaim, “ What man dare, I dare ! ” And his notions respecting the facility and urbanity with which this wonderful change in the State might have been effected, seem to resemble those of Bayes in the Rehearsal, where we see kings politely requested to descend from their thrones, and most politely and obligingly complying with the requisition. Mr. Burke affects to speak with contempt of the “ chill philosophy

phy ” of modern times—but what philosophy so chill as that which refuses to make any allowance for the temporary excesses of an oppressed and exasperated people, in a moment of delirium, agitated at once by the frenzy of joy for the actual overthrow of despotism, and of terror at the apprehension of its re-establishment! Who can wonder, that in the tempest and whirlwind of passion, little regard should be paid to the sober suggestions of “ the pauser, Reason ?” The people of France, however, have shown that they know how to distinguish between the man and the despot. And though it would be highly impolitic and dangerous to invest the King of France, in present circumstances, with that share of authority which is defined for him as supreme executive Magistrate under the new constitution ; yet the person of the King is, and has always been, regarded as sacred ; he is treated with every external demonstration of respect ; but the sword of the State probably will not be again entrusted in his hands, till there is reason to believe he has totally and for ever relinquished his intention of plunging it into her vitals. The National Assembly have now nearly accomplished their original plan, for what they justly stile the renovation of the monarchy. And Mr. Burke is absurd enough to be not only extremely sorry, but extremely angry, that the French nation has not thought proper to adopt the English constitution as the model of their new form of government. It appears to me, I acknowledge, for the reafons

reasons I have stated, that the National Assembly judged erroneously in deviating, in some important points, from the maxims of the English constitution. But it never entered into my imagination, that it was reasonable, or *decorous*, to insult them for thus exercising their own discretion, where their own interests only were concerned, by a declaration penned certainly when the moon was in her altitudes, “ That all the sophisters and constitution-mongers of France could not produce any thing better adapted to preserve a rational and manly freedom, than the course we have pursued—that their extravagant and presumptuous speculations have reduced them to a state truly despicable—that the petitfogging attorneys, obscure curates, and country clowns, of whom the National Assembly is composed, had established a litigious constitution, in the hope of coming in for a share of the spoils in a general scramble—that the union of orders in the Assembly completed that momentum of ignorance, rashness, presumption, and lust of plunder, which nothing has been able to resist—that every landmark of the country was done away in favour of a geometrical and arithmetical constitution—that all orders, ranks and distinctions were confounded, that a barbarous and senseless government, a monster of a constitution, might be formed out of universal anarchy, joined to national bankruptcy—that the National Assembly is a profane burlesque,

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and abominable perversion of that sacred institute,—that their power is like that of the evil principle, only to subvert and destroy—that it has not even the aspect and physiognomy of a grave legislative body—“ nec color imperii, nec frons erat ulla senatus”—that their liberty, in fine, is illiberal and vulgar; their science, presumptuous ignorance; their humanity, savage and brutal.”—“ We, however,” as Mr. Burke affirms, “ have not lost the generosity and dignity of thinking of the 14th century. Helvetius has made no progress amongst us. We have made no discoveries; and we think no discoveries are to be made either in morality or government. We are men of untaught feelings; and instead of casting away our old prejudices, we cherish them, and cherish them because they are prejudices.” And no wonder, for he tells us, that “ prejudice engages the mind in a steady course of wisdom and virtue—though, in these points, he adds, Those who style themselves the *Enlightened*, most essentially differ from the majority of the nation.” And surely if the French nation happens to agree in sentiment with the *Enlightened* among the English, and to entertain somewhat lower ideas of the value of old prejudices, and consequently less predilection for them than Mr. Burke, and other zealous sticklers for the dignity of thinking of the 14th century; it cannot be denied, that they have as just pretensions to judge for themselves, in all the contested and complex concerns of morality and government,

ment, as the English. I know not what obligation the French are under to make the Revolution of 1688, in England, the standard of Reformation in France in 1790, or indeed to pay any sort of attention to it any farther than they themselves deem expedient. And I will venture to add, that in the opinion of the *Enlightened*, it is difficult to conceive how a man, swelling with ideas of his own importance, can render himself more ridiculous, than by arraigning with a magisterial air, and in passionate and abusive language, the public transactions of a foreign country, with which he has no concern; and the government of which will be just as much influenced by his frantic ravings, as the majestic orb of night moving in cloudless splendour by the envious howlings of the wolf, or the ominous hootings of the screech-owl. Who is Mr. Burke? and what are the transcendant qualifications and endowments which entitle him to hold in contempt, the collective wisdom of an illustrious assembly, who, possessing the unlimited confidence of a great and generous nation, are employing their arduous and unremitting efforts in the construction of a permanent fabric of Liberty, such as shall constitute the pride and the happiness of unborn and countless generations, regardless of the wretched and impotent attacks of an insignificant and insolent individual, “ who struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is seen no more?” To those who are not acquainted with the peculiar cast of Mr. Burke’s political

character and conduct, it must appear strange, that, in one of his famous parliamentary harangues during the American war, he should declare, “ That he did not know the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people—that he could not insult and ridicule the feelings of millions of his fellow-creatures ; that he was not *ripe* to pass sentence on the gravest public bodies, entrusted with magistracies of great authority and dignity, and charged with the safety of their fellow-citizens on the same title with himself—that he really thought, for a wise man, this was not judicious ; for a sober man, not decent ; for a mind tinctured with humanity, not mild or merciful.” These were the sentiments of Mr. Burke, it seems, in his unripe years—“ when he was green in judgment.” But however modest or diffident he might once be, it is manifest that he is now *ripe* for passing sentence on a whole nation, without judgment, without decency, and without mercy.

With regard to the resumption of the church lands, which is a very favourite theme of Mr. Burke’s defamation, and which he preposterously represents as an act of lawless rapine, and a violation of the fundamental principles of public justice, I beg leave to observe, that it cannot be pretended, that the Clergy in France, or in any other kingdom, hold their ecclesiastical preferments by the same tenure with their private estates and personal property. The Clergy are a class of citizens,

citizens, to whom is allotted, in common with other classes of men of other descriptions, a portion of the national revenue, as a compensation for certain services to be rendered to the State or the Community, and certain duties to be performed.— “ But,” to transcribe the words of the present excellent Bishop of London, in his primary charge to the clergy of his diocese, “ if once we relinquish our proper stations, and rush into the world; if we consider our preferments merely as life-estates, without any regard to the personal services and personal duties with which they are charged, we shall most assuredly forfeit the good opinion, and, with this, the support of the State. The firm ground we now stand upon will sink from under our feet, and our properties and revenues will be swept away like those of our brethren in a neighbouring kingdom, whose despoliation is said to have been no less owing to their non-residence, their love of pleasure, their loss of the public esteem, than to the subversion of the Civil Government.” Will any one dare to affirm, that, in cases similar to that which the venerable Prelate here supposes, a resumption of that part of the national revenue, so uselessly, or rather so mischievously appropriated, would be no better than a public robbery? Nothing can be clearer than that the State possesses the same inherent authority to reduce or resume the revenues of the Clergy, as the revenues of the Army, or of the various classes of persons em-

ployed in the civil departments of the State. Who will dispute the authority of the State to reduce the public stipends of the Bench of Judges? Do the Bench of Bishops hold their emoluments by a tenure more sacred? The Ecclesiastical Establishment itself exists but by the favour and permission of the State. And some who rank high as Christian philosophers, have not hesitated to declare themselves of opinion, that the whole apparatus is as superfluous as it is expensive; and that Christianity flourished much more before it formed an alliance with the civil powers, than it has ever done since. And indeed if the French are, as Mr. Burke asserts, a nation of Atheists, notwithstanding the inestimable advantages which, according to him, result from a religious establishment, mere curiosity would lead us to enquire, what they would have been if no such establishment had ever existed. The National Assembly are far from entertaining, however, the most distant idea of abolishing the ecclesiastical establishment. They have, indeed, blasted for ever the prospects of ambition and avarice in the church, by a reduction and equalization of its enormous wealth. They have abolished pluralities; they have enforced residence; they have extinguished patronage. These are the mighty evils they have done. And Mr. Burke, in his profound wisdom, has taken upon him to pronounce, " that, in consequence of this arrangement, nothing of science or erudition can exist in the Gallican Church—that all

all men of sobriety will be driven from the clerical profession ; and that the Gallican Clergy will be degraded into a set of licentious, bold, crafty, factious, flattering wretches." — And he adds, " that the present ruling powers have substituted, for that property of which they have plundered the Church, a degrading pensionary establishment, to which no man of liberal ideas, or liberal condition, will destine his children." But how do FACTS correspond with these weak, rash, and dogmatical assertions ? Do men of liberal ideas, and liberal condition, in this or any other country, Utopia excepted, really scruple to accept of civil employments for themselves, or their children, because they are degraded by the pensionary establishments, or pecuniary appointments annexed to them ? If not—How will the ecclesiastical dignity be degraded by them ? Are not the clergy in Holland, and America, and Switzerland, supported in this manner ? Then why may not the French government adopt the same mode of supporting the French Clergy, without being reviled for it by Mr. Burke ? And though, in the Church of Scotland, as now in France, there are no middle classes of Clergy, who *are left at their ease*, as Mr. Burke phrases it, or in other words, who possess large revenues, and perform no services—" no lordly Abbots, purple as their wines—no downy Doctors, to slumber and fatten in the stalls of Theology ; yet it will not be said, that nothing of science or erudition exists in the Scottish Church, so long as a

Robertson, a Campbell, a Gerard, a Blair, and many other names which might be enumerated, continue to adorn and dignify her communion.

Mr. Burke, amongst his other absurdities, entertains the nonsensical notion, that the kingdom of France is, by the new government, divided and subdivided chequer-wise, into regular squares, and squares within squares—a reverie which affords him much scope for idle jests and unseasonable merriment. But his passion is too violent to suffer long restraint; and it even rises, at times, into all the vehemence and *furor* of Delphic inspiration:

— Non vultus, non color unus,
Non comptæ mansære comæ, sed pectus anhelum,
Et rabie fera corda tument.

But in the midst of these eccentric flights, and whilst he fancies that he is speaking oracles, he is betrayed into the most egregious errors and inconsistencies. He confounds a Report of the Committee of Constitution, relative to the mode of election, with a Decree of the National Assembly—thus resting his objections to the admirable system of representation adopted by the Assembly, on the united basis of ignorance and cavil. He objects to the Assembly, that it does not hold the authority it exercises under any constitutional law of the State, although the great end and object of their delegation was *to form* a Constitution. But to require them to act under the authority of a constitutional law before the Constitution itself existed,

existed, is no doubt agreeable to Mr. Burke's theory of the "sublime and beautiful" in politics. And the BULLS of this great infallible are to be received as "mysteries of government," or perhaps "truths too sacred to be discussed." Mr. Burke pretends, "That on his first inspection of the returns to the National Assembly, he foresaw, very nearly as it happened, every thing that has since come to pass." It seems then, he foresaw, from the number of "obscure curates" elected to seats in the Assembly, the certainty of a general resumption of ecclesiastical property.—From the multitude of "notaries and attorneys, the ministers of municipal litigation," he foresaw the establishment of the memorable decree for the gratuitous administration of public justice; and he foresaw, that the "country clowns" would act the part of enlightened patriots, in declaring places under the Crown to be incompatible with places in the Assembly. In fine, he foresaw that this combination of SCRAMBLERS would commence their career, by leaving themselves nothing to scramble for. All these wonders Mr. Burke, "in raptured vision, saw;"—and what mortal man will presume to vie with him in political perspicacity? or dispute his equal right to exclaim with POLONIUS—

Hath there been such a time—I'd fain know that—
That I have positively said 'tis so,
When it proved otherwise!

In descanting upon the state of the French finances,
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Mr. Burke has deemed it expedient to omit all mention of the territorial impost, substituted in lieu of the Gabelle, and other odious and oppressive taxes, now for ever abolished—thus ingeniously contriving to create an annual *deficit* of several millions sterling in the public revenue. And in his exaggerated and tragical accounts of the disorders prevailing in the standing army of France,—that standing evil in a free country—he judiciously keeps entirely out of view, a circumstance which would “ruin our feelings,” and be totally destructive of the stage effect of the piece—*viz.* That a committee, consisting of a number of the ablest men in France, both civil and military, are actually engaged in framing a plan for its constitutional and permanent organization, and the consequent rectification of those temporary disorders by which Mr. Burke has been so greatly alarmed. The popular Assemblies of Department, Mr. Burke styles a collection of independent democracies; and asserts that this republican system can never be governed as one body, or be set in motion by the impulse of one mind; and that when the National Assembly has completed its work, it will have accomplished its ruin: forgetting that the newly established Provincial Courts are manifestly intended to fill the void created by the extinction of the antient Provincial Parliaments; and that he himself lays it down as a maxim, that good policy required them to build on the antient foundations. And as to the practicability of this system, Mr. Burke might

have reflected, that the vast continent of America is at this day governed, as Holland has been for two hundred years past, by a National Assembly or States-General, and a multiplicity of subordinate Legislatures, possessing powers far superior to those vested by the new constitution of France in the provincial assemblies or municipalities. Though France at this moment enjoys perfect tranquillity, and is rising rapidly to the summit of prosperity, Mr. Burke insists that the nation is ruined; and says, “ that the leaders of the Revolution tell the people to comfort them in the rags with which they have clothed them—that they are a nation of Philosophers.” But it is certain that the commonalty of that kingdom, if they are clothed at all, can scarcely be clothed worse now than they were previous to the Revolution; and I hope the rags of Philosophy are at least as respectable as the tatters of Despotism.

As, according to an established observation, the English aspire to a comparison with the antient Romans, so the French have been equally ambitious of tracing a resemblance between themselves and the Athenians, who were beyond all controversy, not only the most free, but the most learned, and most polished nation of antiquity. And a ROCHEFOUCAULT, or a LIANCOURT, may now with a noble pride, and the justest propriety, adopt the language of Pericles in the famous funeral oration recorded by Thucydides: “ Our government,” says that illustrious statesman and patriot,

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is popular, because the end of it is the happiness of the people or nation, and not that of a few individuals. In our civil capacities, we all of us enjoy the equal empire of law and equity; and how different soever may be our stations and conditions, possess the same privileges, and have equal pretensions to offices of trust and dignity. Respect and consideration are not paid to birth, but to merit. Neither poverty nor meanness of condition exclude any one from rising to power or influence, provided he be worthy of them, and capable of serving his country. Our social and familiar intercourse is as equal as our public, and is characterized by urbanity, freedom, and gaiety."

But Mr. Burke tells us, that the people are grossly deluded, and that "those who stand upon that elevation of reason to which nothing can ascend but the spirit and moral quality of human actions, will say to the teachers of the Palais Royal, The Cardinal of Lorraine was the murderer of the sixteenth century—you have the glory of being the murderers of the eighteenth; and this is the only difference between you." Is there no difference then between a Cardinal of Lorraine, whose "robes of function" were dyed in human gore—a bigot drunk with the mingled fumes of ambition and fanaticism, whose red arm of vengeance was stretched over a whole nation, to whose slaughterous thoughts direness had become familiar, who triumphed in crimes, and delighted in horrors—Is there no difference, I say, between such a man, and

and a Bishop of AUTUN, or an Abbé SEYEVES, who have consecrated their labours and their talents to the diffusion of liberty, virtue, peace, and happiness, throughout the globe—and whose sole and noble aim it is to exalt the savage into MAN? What shocking outrages are these, and what sensations do they not excite! “*Quousque tandem abutere
Catalina patientia nostra?*”

I must just be permitted to notice the insufferable arrogance and contumely with which Mr. Burke has thought proper to treat the Revolution and Constitutional Societies. It is scarcely credible, at a period when knowledge and liberality are so generally diffused, and the Gothic and barbarous prejudices attached to the splendid, but frivolous distinctions of rank and title, are so sensibly abated, that any individual, in any station of life, should think himself entitled to assume these supercilious and lofty airs, in animadverting upon the conduct of any classes or descriptions of his fellow-citizens, of general fairness and respectability of character. Does Mr. Burke imagine, that men in these times will be over-awed by the empty appellations of Privy Counsellor, and Right Honourable? or does he claim amongst his other privileges as a member of Parliament, the privilege of insulting those whom he represents, the moment he finds himself in secure possession of his seat? Unbiased myself by any connection with either Society, I firmly believe there are in both, persons whose heads and hearts would not suffer in the comparison

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son with Mr. Burke. These associations, it seems, have had the misfortune to incur Mr. Burke's high displeasure, in consequence of the address of congratulation moved by Dr. Price, and transmitted by their President, Earl Stanhope, to the National Assembly, on the glorious restoration of the National Liberty; and which met with so honourable and flattering a reception from that illustrious body. Mr. Burke, however, tells us, "that he should suspend his congratulations on the new liberty of France, until he was informed how it had been combined with government, with public force, with the discipline and obedience of armies, with the collection of an effective and well-distributed revenue, with morality and religion, with the solidity of property, with peace and order, with civil and social manners. The effect of liberty to individuals, is, that they may do what they please; we ought to see what it will please them to do, before we risque compliments which may be soon turned into complaints. Am I to felicitate a madman, who has escaped from the protecting restraint and wholesome darkness of his cell, on his restoration to the enjoyment of light and liberty? Am I to congratulate a highwayman and murderer, who has broke prison, upon the recovery of his natural rights?"—Very extraordinary comparisons these, truly! But, Sir, I hope we may be permitted, without trespassing too far upon your condescension, to congratulate a fellow-citizen, or even a fellow-man of like passions and feelings

feelings with our own, who has miraculously escaped from the horrid dungeons of oppression, on the recovery of *his* liberty, without waiting till the next century to see what use he will please to make of it. "Grand swelling sentiments of liberty," Mr. Burke indeed tells us, "he is sure he does not despise." But if these grand and swelling sentiments are never to be reduced to act, and if the spirit of liberty is to evaporate in high-sounding words, instead of producing effects really beneficial to mankind, I am sure he would be perfectly justifiable in despising them; and others also will be equally justified in despising those who either insidiously or ostentatiously affect to adopt them. Mr. Burke confesses, however, "that he never liked this continual talk of resistance and revolution, or the practice of making the extreme medicine of the State its daily bread." Now it is certain that resistance and revolution have been continually talked of in England, for more than an hundred years past; and as no harm has yet resulted from it, Mr. Burke's dislike to this *talk* seems to proceed from a species of panic so little allied to reason, that it might on the contrary be justly deemed a most alarming symptom of the degeneracy of the times, whenever resistance and revolution shall cease to be talked of. That the people have an inherent right to resist oppression, to dethrone and punish tyrants, and to provide by the most effectual means in their power, for their own security and happiness, are, it seems, undeniably

niable truths—but these truths, we are told, are not to be *prostituted* by promiscuous and vulgar communication. No—“ this would render the habit of society dangerously valetudinary.” Who could have thought that England had such a delicate constitution!—But, to borrow one of Mr. Burke’s choice metaphors, they are to be “ pickled in the preserving juices ” of a new-fangled and mystical state-oratory, and carefully laid by for future occasions. The danger is, lest these wholesome, though unpalatable maxims of government, after being embalmed for a century or two in this precious pickle, might become somewhat mouldy and unfit for use. And I acknowledge, I had much rather the pulse of the Nation should sometimes beat too high in favour of Liberty, than have recourse to the “ oblivious antidote ” of this State-empiric. As to the practice of “ making the extreme medicine of the State its daily bread,” to which Mr. Burke with some appearance of reason objects, I would just beg leave to hint, as the distinction does not appear to have occurred to him, that actual resistance is one thing, and mere talk of revolution and resistance is another. And if Mr. Burke would farther please to reflect, that those who have most zealously maintained the abstract theory of resistance, have been under the present happy establishment the most distant from wishing to have practical recourse to it, he would surely dismiss his jealous apprehensions, and suffer his “ *perturbed spirit* ” to rest in peace—or tremble for

for the safety of those governments only, under the dire oppression of which, resistance and revolution are not the subjects of open and unrestrained converse, but of deep and silent meditation. After all, it is somewhat surprizing to be told by Mr. Burke, " that almost all the high-bred republicans of his time have become, after a short space, the most decided thorough-bred courtiers :" And still more so to hear him account for it, by declaring, " that they were *mere speculatists*, who indulged in magnificent reveries, because they never intended going beyond speculation ; and who, finding their principles not applicable to cases which call only for a qualified, civil or legal resistance, in such cases employed no resistance at all, but left the whole task and burden of opposition to devolve upon those whom, in the pride and intoxication of their theories, they regarded as little better than Tories." That there are persons who seriously disclaim or contemn all means of resistance to the misconduct of government, but such as are contrary to the letter of the law, and the established forms of the constitution, I acknowledge I never before suspected : But if these high-bred and turbulent republicans are so easily metamorphosed into thorough-bred courtiers, what has the government to fear from their speculations ?-- or how is the State endangered by them ? and wherefore the terrific exclamation of Mr. Burke, " Let them not break prison, to burst like a Levanter, to sweep the earth with their hurricane, and to break up

the fountains of the great deep, to overwhelm us!" By a flight touch of the wand of this " Harlequin Grotius," the scene is suddenly reversed; and instead of the stormy Atlantic of anarchy, we shudder at the view of the vast and motionless Pacific of slavery.

In Mr. Burke's wild and impotent attempts to establish the High Tory doctrine of an inherent hereditary right in the Monarch, independent of the choice of the people, he entirely forgets that the laws of England are an expression of the will of the people, declared by their representatives—that the law or rule of succession derives its force solely from this origin; and while this law remains unrepealed, the inference surely is, that the people choose to be so governed. And though the constitution of England refuses to suppose that the Monarch will betray his trust, yet if this should ever actually happen, who will dare to affirm in express words, that the people have not a right to resume the trust so forfeited, and to transfer it to more deserving hands? Or, in other language, that the right of deposing a tyrant, and of conferring the Crown upon the man of their choice, does not inhere in the Nation? But Mr. Burke pretends, " that it would be to repeat a very trite story, to recal to our memories all those circumstances which demonstrate that the *accepting* of King William was not properly a choice." Of these circumstances, however trite they may be, I recollect nothing. I can only recal to my remembrance,

brance, that the infant son and both the daughters of King James were excluded or removed from the succession ; and that the Crown was offered to the Prince of Orange by the two Houses of Parliament, in the name of all the people of England. And “ by a sweeping clause of ban and anathema,” all the Catholic branches of the Royal Family were afterwards superseded, to make room for the House of Hanover. “ But,” says Mr. Burke, “ to all those who did not wish to recal King James, or to deluge their country in blood, and again to bring their religion, laws and liberties into the peril they had just escaped, it was an act of necessity, in the strictest moral sense in which necessity can be taken.” This is an evasion almost too gross for the meridian of St. Omer ; for, what does moral necessity mean, but cogency of motive ? Because, therefore, there existed solid, weighty, and urgent reasons impelling them to make this choice, Mr. Burke would fain persuade us that it was no choice at all ; and that King William reigned, as he tells us his present Majesty continues to do, in *CONTEMPT* of the choice of the people. “ This prattling,” to adopt Mr. Burke’s own polite language, “ deserves not the name of sophistry ; it is nothing but plain impudence.”

It is observable, that Mr. Burke, upon all occasions, takes upon him to declare the sentiments of the people of England, which I am persuaded he no less falsely than ostentatiously represents as perfectly analogous to his own, with as much confi-

dence as if the people of England had actually elected him their public Orator, and authorized him to say such things in their name, as he may safely defy any of them to understand. "When the people," says Mr. Burke, "have emptied themselves of all the lust of selfish will, which, without religion, it is utterly impossible they ever should; when they are conscious that they exercise, and exercise perhaps in a higher link of the order of delegation, the power which, to be legitimate, must be according to that eternal immutable law in which will and reason are the same, they will be more careful how they place power in base and incapable hands." Again—"Persuaded that all things ought to be done with reference, and referring all to the point of reference, to which all should be directed, they think themselves bound, not only as individuals, in the sanctuary of the heart, or as congregated in that personal capacity, to renew the memory of their high origin and cast, but also in their corporate character, to perform their national homage," &c. And again: "Society is indeed a contract; and each contract of each particular State is but a clause in the great primæval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact, sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures each in their appointed place." This has at least the merit of being an original definition of the original compact; and it

is, I suppose, agreeable to Mr. Burke's idea of political reason, which he tells us is "a computing principle, adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing, morally, and not metaphysically or mathematically, true moral demonstrations." And in applying this principle to the investigation of the rights of man, it must ever be remembered, that "in proportion as they are metaphysically true, they are morally and politically false;" which clearly proves, to the confusion of the "shallow and short-sighted coxcombs of philosophy," that truth not only may be, but actually is at eternal and irreconcileable variance with itself. Such, to assume a more serious tone, is the *Babylonian jargon*, with which politicians by profession, shrouded in the veil of mystery, insult the understandings of mankind; and on the strength of which they arrogate, without a blush, all wisdom, knowledge, and even honesty, to themselves. And whoever attempts to diffuse rational ideas on the subject of government, in language level to common capacities, must expect to be abused and vilified, as an enemy to the peace and order of society, and a factious disturber of the public tranquillity: Or at best as a blunderer, who "mistakes the deviation from the principle, for the principle itself;"—that is, who maintains resistance to be the general rule of conduct, and obedience merely the deviation from it. Mr. Burke asserts, "that no government could stand a moment, if it could be blown down with any thing so loose and indefinite as an opinion

of misconduct." But might not the Mufti of Constantinople say the very same thing, in defence of the Turkish government? And did it never occur to this veteran politician, that there are degrees of misconduct? And as, on the one hand, a government neither can nor ought to be *blown down* by slight and occasional instances of misconduct; on the other, Mr. Burke himself will allow, that for radical and incorrigible misconduct, a government may be *blown down*, "provided it is done with dignity." Mr. Burke's remark, therefore, is either futile or false: and the gross abuse levelled against Dr. Price on this head, is manifestly founded on still more gross misrepresentation. The sentiments of Dr. Price respecting the general theory of government, do not in fact at all differ from those of SOMERS, LOCKE, HOADLEY, HELVETIUS, MONTESQUIEU, and the long train of illustrious Writers in both kingdoms, who have maintained, or admitted, that the people are the fountain of all just power, and that oppression is a sufficient ground of resistance. When Dr. Price speaks of the right of the people to choose their own governors, to depose them for misconduct, and to frame governments for themselves, can any one be really absurd enough to believe that he is speaking of the maxims of common or of statute law? We all know, that the English constitution supposes, and wisely supposes, that the King can do no wrong; and it is certain that no government can expressly authorize resistance against itself.

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Will Mr. Burke pretend, that the Revolution in England was an event to be justified by an appeal to the *forms* of the constitution, which must necessarily regard resistance as rebellion? No—but the public safety required a deviation from forms. And how, in the name of common sense, with which the fine sense of Mr. Burke seems to have very little connection, is that deviation to be vindicated, but by resorting to the original and primary principles of government, as stated and defended by Dr. Price? Almost in the same breath, indeed, in which Dr. Price is impeached for inculcating treasonable doctrines, Mr. Burke himself admits, that a tyrant may be deposed, and even punished, provided it is done with dignity. But however dignified Mr. Burke's plan of resistance to tyranny might be, most assuredly in the execution of it, or "in reducing his principles to practice," he would not incur less personal risque from the penalties of the law than Dr. Price; so that his imperious scorn, which knows no distinction between a Cataline and a Cato, a Jack Cade and a Hampden, a Peters and a Price *, may be with equal and retorted scorn repaid. In reply, however, to the clear and simple position of Dr. Price, that the people have a right to cashier their gover-

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nots for misconduct; Mr. Burke farther says, “ The question of dethroning, or if these gentlemen like the phrase better, *cashiering* Kings, will always be, as it has always been, an extraordinary question of State, and wholly out of the law—a question, like all other questions of State, of dispositions and of means, and of probable consequences, rather than of positive rights. As it was not made for common abuses, so it is not to be agitated by common minds; the speculative line of demarcation, where obedience ought to end, and resistance must begin, is faint, obscure, and not easily desirable. It is not a single act, or a single event, which determines it. Government must be abused and deranged indeed, before it can be thought of: and the prospect of the future, must be as bad as the experience of the past. When things are in that lamentable condition, the nature of the disease is to indicate the remedy to those whom Nature has qualified to administer, in extremities, this critical, ambiguous, bitter potion, to a distempered State. Times and occasions, and provocations, will teach their own lessons. The wise will determine from the gravity of the case; the irritable, from sensibility to oppression; the high-minded, from disdain and indignation at abusive power in unworthy hands; the brave and bold, from the love of honourable danger in a generous cause;—but with or without right, a revolution will be the very last resource of the thinking and the good.” In this passage, the confusion of ideas, which almost invariably pervades

vades the reasonings of Mr. Burke, is such, that he does not even distinguish between the abstract question of the lawfulness of resistance to oppression—the question relative to the degree of oppression, which will justify resistance—and the question concerning the expediency of resistance, supposing the justice of it previously ascertained, which is very different from either. Dr. Price merely affirms the abstract right, in general terms—a right which even Mr. Burke could not venture expressly to deny; and therefore he preposterously blends and confounds abstract and concrete, and represents the whole amalgamated mass of absurdity, as a grand and complicated question of State, not to be agitated by common or vulgar minds. But how is the theory of Dr. Price affected by the idle and ostentatious observations of Mr. Burke? They are manifestly irrelevant, and totally foreign to the purpose of his argument: for, clear as the abstract principle doubtless is, every one will allow, that the right and reasonable application of it demands the highest exertions of wisdom, knowledge and ability. But still a foundation must be laid for the success of those exertions, in the general belief and avowal of the first simple and salutary speculative position. And after all the exclamations we have heard against political theologians, and theological politicians, I am not able to perceive in what respect a 5th November sermon at the Old Jewry, is more reprehensible than a 30th January sermon at the Abbey or St. Margarets. As to Mr. Burke's favourite

favourite notion, that there are extraordinary questions of State which ought not to be agitated by common minds, I must acknowledge, that I am not acquainted with any “line of demarcation,” or standard of intellect, by which men can be justly precluded from agitating any question they think proper; and certainly men of common minds will naturally expect to derive information and improvement from such discussion. But it is the misfortune of the present age, as we are told by Mr. Burke, that every thing is made the subject of discussion. And if men of common minds would but consent to save themselves all this trouble of investigation, and suffer men of uncommon minds, like Mr. Burke, to tell them what they are to believe, I, for one, have no doubt but that “the dignity of thinking of the 14th century,” would very speedily be restored amongst us. But, alas! the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more will men be elevated to that enviable state of proud and blind submission, in which, with a generous and gallant courtesy, they renounced all pretension to see with their own eyes, to hear with their own ears, or to judge with their own understandings!

Mr. Burke's indignation rises very high against Dr. Price, for asserting that the King is no more than the first servant of the public, created by it, and responsible to it. But, is it the will of the community, or is it his own will, that a King is bound to execute? If the public will, then in the clearest

clearest and most intelligible sense of the term, he is the servant of the public, however elevated his commission, or whatever stress Mr. Burke may choose to lay on the profane titles of Sovereign Lord and Sacred Majesty, by which, in the language of feudal barbarism, he is sometimes distinguished. Mr. Burke himself allows, that Kings are undoubtedly, in one sense, the servants of the public, because their power has no other rational end than that of the national advantage. But, what is disloyalty and republicanism in Dr. Price, becomes, in Mr. Burke, "generous and manly sentiment"—"sensibility of honour"—"dignified obedience!"—But farther, Kings are created by the people. This Mr. Burke will not admit, and seems rather of opinion, that they are of an essence increate, or that they created themselves, or perhaps that they derive their origin and authority, like the Incas of Peru, from the sun and the moon. In short, he will admit any thing rather than that they are the political creation of the people.—Lastly, Kings are responsible to the public. "It is false," exclaims Mr. Burke; "our Constitution knows nothing of a Magistrate, like the *Justicia* of Arragon, nor of any Court, legally settled, for submitting the King to public responsibility." But there is a Constitution, ignorant as Mr. Burke may be of its existence, the authority of which extends, not over England only, but the whole Globe—a Constitution founded on the basis of eternal reason, which declares the safety of the people

people to be the supreme law: Therefore, to transcribe the ever-memorable words of Sir William Blackstone, " Though the oppressions of the sovereign power must necessarily be out of the reach of any stated rule, or express legal provision, if they ever unfortunately happen, the wisdom of the times must provide new remedies upon new emergencies. And when desolation advances with gigantic strides, mankind will not be reasoned out of the feelings of humanity; nor will sacrifice their Liberty, by a scrupulous adherence to those political maxims which were at first established to preserve it." The celebrated Hume also, who has often been stigmatized as a Tory, though the *Toryism* of Hume is, in my opinion, far preferable to the *Whiggism* of Burke, hesitates not to say, " That common sense teaches us, that as government binds us to obedience only on account of its tendency to public utility, the duty of allegiance must always, in extraordinary emergencies, yield to the primary and original obligation." And he adds, that the ONLY question among good reasoners, respects the *degree* of necessity which can justify resistance, and render it lawful or commendable. And though he considers, for just and weighty reasons, which he enumerates, resistance to be the last refuge in extreme and desperate cases, he advances, with his characteristic good sense, two arguments in vindication of those who have inculcated, with unremitting zeal, a theory so practically dangerous. The first is, the extravagant height to which their

antagonists

antagonists have carried the doctrine of obedience, which, as he says, made it necessary to insist upon the exceptions, in order to defend the injured rights of truth and liberty. The second, which he stiles the better reason, arises from the very nature of our Constitution, which *establishes* the irresponsibility of the Monarch, because of the impossibility of providing a superior power, in the ordinary course of law, to chastise the exorbitances of the sovereign power. But as a right without a remedy would be an absurdity, the remedy in this case is, as he tells us, the extraordinary one of resistance, when the Constitution can be no otherwise defended. Resistance, therefore, is a doctrine consonant to the spirit of the Constitution ; and in a free country, which has, at the same time, limited the Sovereign by law, and placed him, in his own person, beyond the reach of the law; it ought never, as the whole scope of his judicious and animated reasoning implies, to be forgotten, or lost sight of, and certainly much less to be artfully disguised, or studiously concealed *." So far, indeed, is Dr. Price from advancing any doctrines new or strange on the subject of Government, that we find the venerable Hooker inculcating the same radical sentiments two hundred years before him. " Government was originally ordained," says that justly admired Writer, " by mutual agreement amongst men yielding themselves subject thereunto ; that unto whom they GRANTED authority to rule and

* Hume's Essays, Vol. I. p. 487—90.

govern,

govern, by them the peace, tranquillity, and happy estate of the rest might be procured. And the public power of every society, being above every soul contained in the same society, must be obeyed, UNLESS there be reason shewed, which may necessarily enforce, that the law of Reason, or of God, doth enjoin the contrary. For men always knew, that where force and injury was offered, they might be defenders of themselves. **LAWs THEY ARE NOT, WHICH PUBLIC APPROBATION HATH NOT MADE SO**; and for any Prince or Potentate, of what kind so ever upon earth, to exercise the power of making laws of himself, is no better than mere tyranny.” And he elsewhere tells us, “ That, to live by one man’s will, became the cause of all mens misery.” How does this differ, except as *Lemma* and *Corollary* differ, from the assertion of Dr. Price, That a King of England is almost the only lawful monarch upon earth, because almost the only one who governs by the choice or consent of the people? Hooker, no less than Price, saw with indignation the sacred Rights of man flagrantly violated, and trampled upon, by the arbitrary domination of princes; and Mr. Burke might affirm of the former, as truly as of the latter, “ That he proclaims usurpers by circles of longitude and latitude over the whole globe.” Happily the reputation of Hooker, now consecrated by time, rises far above the reach of Mr. Burke’s malevolence. But had that great man published his immortal work in the present

day, he would have been doubtless insulted, in the language of ineffable pride and scorn, as “ a political theologian, or theological politician, equally ignorant of the character he left, and of that he assumed.” But if Kings, who did not owe their crown to the choice of their people, nor founded their right to govern on the public probation, “ had no title to make laws;” What, exclaims Mr. Burke in great consternation, will become of the Statute *de tallagia non concedendo* —of the *Petition of right*—of the act of *Habeas Corpus*—Laws of inestimable value to our liberty? It is plain, that Mr. Burke, in his affright, forgets what in his calmer moments he readily concedes —that government is founded upon utility; being, as he somewhere expresses it, a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants. That regard to general utility, therefore, from which government first originated, creates also a civil obligation of obedience to established governments, by which this end is in any degree attained, though constructed on principles manifestly unjust and unlawful, *if* resistance offers no probable or reasonable prospect of advantage or redress. And if a free government be afterwards established, the laws of the former government, which remain unrepealed, are virtually and substantially confirmed. So that if the throne of England *had* been “ stained with the blot of a continual usurpation previous to the Revolution,” the laws which he enumerates would now rest precisely

precisely upon the same foundation of authority with the laws subsequently enacted—a *mystery* of government this, perfectly intelligible to men of *common minds*, and which, if it were not unfortunately too plain to be comprehended by the incomprehensible genius of Mr. Burke, must certainly be a source of great consolation to him.

But, to be serious—How unlike, and how inexpressibly superior appears the clear and manly sense of Blackstone, Hume, and Hooker, whom I have purposely quoted in preference to less guarded and more popular writers, to the perplexed and gaudy sophistry of Burke! from whose work if any one can extract a just and rational, or indeed any intelligible theory of government, *erit mihi magnus Apollo*. Evidently possessing no clear or distinct ideas upon the subject, he is alternately engaged in defending and opposing the same radical positions, “One foot on sea, and one on land—to one thing constant never.” His feelings, however, are much more easily developed than his principles; and that delicate sensibility with which he sympathizes in the sufferings of the great—extending itself even to “the killing languor and over-laboured lassitude” of those whose sole and dire misfortune it is to have nothing to do—is everywhere contrasted by a proud and stately apathy for the miseries of the people, or, as Mr. Burke rather chuses to stile them, “the fwinish multitude.”

Upon

Upon the whole, this book of Mr. Burke exhibits a striking illustration of the observation of Selden, that "no man is the wiser for his learning," or, as he might have added, for his wit, or his eloquence: for a performance so weak, so incoherent, so destitute of argument and information, written so much at random, and at the same time in a stile so peculiarly insolent, I believe the English language affords no example of. "First, your logic, and then your rhetoric," says the celebrated Writer just now quoted; but *this* is the performance of a mere rhetorician, who fancies that a pompous flow of words, and a gorgeous glare of imagery, render all attention to sense and consistency needless. It is a book dangerously calculated to soothe the pride, to dazzle the imagination, and to inflame the ambition of Kings—it has a tendency to repress, or rather to extinguish, every generous emotion of the soul, and to plunge us again into the chaos of Gothic ignorance and darkness. Amongst all his bold assertions, What is it that Mr. Burke has *proved*? or rather, what is it that he has even attempted to *prove*? He has affirmed, that France was, previous to the Revolution, in possession of a good Constitution: But, instead of developing with political or philosophical accuracy, the principles of this Constitution, and the beneficial effects of those principles as they operated upon the community at large—he talks only of "her fame in war; of the flourishing state of those arts which beautify and polish life; of her able statesmen, of her profound

lawyers and theologians; her philosophers, her critics, her historians and antiquaries; her poets, and her orators, sacred and profane :"—not in the least recollecting, that when he had another purpose for the moment to serve, he had himself stigmatized this government as "a **RELENTLESS DESPOTISM**—a despotism indeed proudly arrayed in manners, gallantry, splendour, magnificence, and even covered over with the imposing robes of science and literature." He has also affirmed, that the present Constitution is "a senseless and barbarous Constitution—a Constitution subversive of the public order, dignity, and happiness." Of this Constitution, —the result of an ardent and enlightened patriotism —not merely his inveterate prejudices, but his gross ignorance of facts, evidently and totally disqualify him from forming any judgment. He has affirmed, that a radical and permanent reform might have been effected in the State, without tumult or bloodshed. But it is certain, that if the antient mode of voting by orders had been adopted by the Assembly, the *Tiers Etat*, or the representatives of the people, would have been degraded into mere cyphers—that the business of reform must have been entirely left to the Crown, acting in concert with the Nobles and Clergy; and who, besides Mr. Burke, would deem it expedient or adviseable to leave the oppression to be destroyed by the oppressors? The conjunction of the three Orders, so opposite to the views of the aristocratic faction, was succeeded by the most alarming measures on the part of the Court. A formidable military force was collected,

collected, all mention of which is omitted by Mr. Burke, as a circumstance possibly too trifling to notice; and the National Assembly was menaced with instant destruction: In these circumstances, the insurrection of July was not, as Mr. Burke styles it, “ an abominable sedition;” but a great and glorious effort of the people, in defence of themselves, and their representatives. And if they had failed in their heroic attempt upon the Bastille, the National Assembly would doubtless soon have found themselves in a state of perfect, though not very enviable security within its walls. This insurrection, however short its duration, was really and properly a civil war—nor did the danger of a counter-revolution cease, till the person of the Monarch was by another daring exertion of irregular, though salutary violence, subjected to those severe restraints which cannot even now be with perfect safety removed. Lastly, Mr. Burke has affirmed, that it is no less than high treason to maintain that the people have an inherent right to chuse their own governors, to depose them for misconduct, and to frame new governments, in case of the incompetency or delinquency of the former governments, for themselves. Consequently, the two Houses of Parliament, and all the people of England, were guilty of high treason, in deposing King James, and in placing King William on the throne; and the throne of England, since the Revolution, has been “ stained with the blot of one continual usurpation.”

In this new species of Gothic romance, are indeed interspersed many very old and sage reflections on the evil and danger of innovation as such, whether civil, political, or religious. To avoid the evils of inconstancy and versatility, ten thousand times worse than those of obstinacy and the blindest prejudice—evils by which the whole chain and continuity of the commonwealth would be broken, and no part of life would retain its acquisitions;” or, in other words, to guard against evils existing only in a distempered imagination, and to fortify those blind and obstinate prejudices which are actually prevalent, “ We have, as Mr. Burke is pleased to express himself, *consecrated* the State, that no man should look into defects or corruptions but with due caution—that he should approach them with pious awe, and trembling solicitude.” For my own part, posseſſing unfortunately only “ a common mind,” and viewing things consequently only in a common way, I have, I confess, not accustomed myself to regard acknowledged defects and corruptions of any kind, with that holy reverence which Mr. Burke recommends. And notwithstanding the general excellence of that constitution of Government which was established at the æra of the Revolution, it appears to me, that various political corruptions and defects still exist, much more calculated to excite indignation than pious awe. Such, for instance, is that over-ruling influence of the Crown, which has now arisen to such an alarming height of presumption, as openly to claim
the

the uninformed, unlimited, unfailing confidence of Parliament, in the rectitude of all its transactions, as its constitutional right.—Such also is that radical defect in the system of Parliamentary representation, which so materially detracts from its dignity and authority, as to embolden the Ministers of the Crown to insult the Legislature by this daring language, without risking the punishment due to their temerity. In other, and better times, the perpetuation of a formidable standing army in time of peace was accounted an evil; to which may be added, the existence of a second army of placemen and pensioners, scarcely less numerous, and maintained at the public expence in luxurious idleness; while the commonalty of the realm are groaning under the oppression of a grievous and almost intolerable load of taxes, imposed for the support of an enormous peace-establishment, and the payment of the interest of an incredible public debt, contracted by folly the most egregious, to gratify ambition the most pernicious. These are amongst the evils which Mr. Burke thinks we ought to approach with pious awe and trembling solicitude; and of these defects and corruptions if the Nation should demand a radical reform, which, in my opinion, would be the best mode of *confiscating* the State, Mr. Burke would turn pale with apprehension, “lest the commonwealth itself should in a few generations crumble away, be disconnected into the dust and powder of individuality, and at length dispersed to all the winds of Heaven.” Ever the obsequious and devoted

admirer of antiquity, Mr. Burke even deems it a subject of triumphant boast, that little or no alteration has been made since the 14th or 15th century, in our old Monkish institutions, and Gothic modes of education—"adhering," says he, "in this particular, as in all things else, to our old settled maxim, not entirely, or at once to depart from antiquity." It should seem, therefore, that when any proposition apparently conducive to the public improvement is advanced, that Mr. Burke thinks it the part of wisdom to take four or five hundred years to *consider* about it. "We thought," says he, "these old institutions capable of receiving and meliorating, and above all, of preserving the accessions of science and literature, as the order of Providence should successively produce them." This being the case, therefore, and these old institutions being found "capable of meliorating the accessions of science produced by the order of Providence;" it was very properly and wisely judged, according to Mr. Burke, to leave, in return, the order of Providence to meliorate the defects of the old institutions. After all this astonishing display of wisdom, a man of *common* understanding will probably be still inclined to ask, "Is every idea of reformation or improvement, then, chimerical and absurd, because innovation is, or may be attended with hazard?"—Undoubtedly it is the part of true policy to investigate and discriminate; to observe the signs of the times, and to attempt only what is feasible as well as beneficial.—That in France nothing has been attempted but what was feasible,

feasible, the success of the attempt plainly demonstrates ; and the people by whom and for whom this change was wrought, are perfectly satisfied that it will prove highly beneficial. In these circumstances, therefore, for a man to seat himself in the chair of wisdom, in order to read a tedious and pompous lecture, filled with trite and common-place maxims of policy and prudence, which no one is inclined to dispute, or, in the language of Shakespeare, “ to expostulate—

“ What Majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, or time is time,
Were nothing but to waite night, day, and time.”

Elate, however, with the idea of being a Statesman born and bred, Mr. Burke reproaches the French nation for calling in the aid of philosophy in framing their new plan of Government ; and of philosophers in general, he speaks upon every occasion with the most sovereign contempt and disdain—seriously referring us for a true idea of their character, and estimate of their merits, to Swift’s whimsical romance of Laputa. But were not LOCKE, HUME, MONTESQUIEU, and FRANKLIN, philosophers ? And if such men as these are not to be consulted, from whom are the vulgar race of mortals to expect assistance and illumination in cases of doubt and difficulty ? Not surely from proud, positive, and passionate dogmatists, the avowed enemies of discussion, who sigh for the return of the antient times of chivalry, that golden age of aristocracy, and who are so blindly and obstinately

ately attached to old prejudices, that they even profess to cherish them because they *are* prejudices. Besides, Mr. Burke should consider, before he vents his rage against philosophy, that it might have pleased Heaven to have made him a philosopher; though so clear does his character now stand from any suspicion of this nature, that, to adopt the words of Mr. Locke, in speaking of Sir Robert Filmer, " If any one will be at the pains to strip his discourse of the flourish of doubtful expressions, and endeavour to reduce his words to direct, positive, intelligible propositions, and then compare them with one another, he will be quickly satisfied there was never so much glib nonsense put together in well-sounding English." Upon a calm review, however, of Mr. Burke's extravagancies, indignation gradually subsides into contempt; and I conclude this series of remarks with what I conceive to be the best apology Candour itself can offer for the recent conduct of this hot and heady old LEAR of the political drama—" 'Tis the infirmity of his age—yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself; the best and soundest of his time hath been but rash—then must we look from his age to receive, not alone the imperfections of long-engrafted condition, but, there-withal, the unruly waywardness and inconstant starts that infirm and choleric years bring with them."

F I N I S.

